

REASON, TRUTH  
AND  
CERTAINTY  
OF THE  
MORAL AFFECTIONS

BOOK II.

Containing, Discourses upon  
Subjects as are thought most  
proper for  
Sections.

By Robert Jenkins, Chaplain to  
His Grace the Earl of Essex, and  
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THE  
 REASONABLENESS  
 OF  
 CERTAINTY  
 OF  
 RELIGION



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THE  
PREFACE.

**T**HERE never appeared, I believe, among Christians so general a Disaffection as in the present Age, to the Christian Religion, in Men pretending at least to Reason and Learning, and Natural Religion, and Moral Vertue. And tho' I could have little Encouragement to hope, that I should write any thing which might much prevail with Men of these Accomplishments; yet I was persuaded that so good a Cause, tho' but in weak Hands, could not fail of some Effect upon all that would be at the pains to consider it. And to this Purpose, I thought, the best way would be, not to read Lectures, as it were, of Anatomy upon the several Parts of it, and represent it Piece-meal, like a lifeless Carcass, divided and dissected; tho' I had been able to shew never so much Skill in the Operation; but to give an entire View of the Grounds and Reasons of Christianity, the connexion of its Parts between themselves and the Preference which it has to all other Religions; from  
thence

whence, I knew, it must appear in as true a Light, and with as much Life and Force, as it could do under the Disadvantages, which might be expected from no better a Pen. There is an Excellency in every Part of our Religion separately consider'd, but the strength and vigour of each Part is in the Relation it has to the rest, and the several Parts must be taken altogether, if we would have a true Knowledge, and make a just Estimate of the Whole.

But that which I made my more particular Care, and which, I thought, the more requir'd my Pains, because I had not observed it to be much insisted upon by others, was to shew the Necessity of a Divine Revelation, the insufficiency of Natural Religion, and the Imperfections and Errors of Philosophy, as well as the manifest Falshood of the Religions both of the Heathens and of the Mahometans; and moreover to prove, that besides all other Things requisite to a Divine Revelation, the Religion delivered in the Old and New Testament has received a full Promulgation in all Parts of the World. From these Foundations thus laid and secur'd, we have no less than a Demonstration for the Truth of our Holy Religion.

We are often told by those that are no Friends to our Religion, that we must by all means take great Care of not being deceived through the Prejudices derived from our Education; but I believe it would be found upon  
Enquiry

Enquiry, that such Men are so far from being prejudiced in Favour of our Religion, that their Prejudices lie extreamly against it. For, besides the Corruption of Humane Nature always inclining to Error and Vice, tho' they had the Principles of Christianity instill'd into them in their tender Years, yet they could learn them then only as confessed Truths, to be receiv'd for Articles of Faith and Rules of Life. But the first thing probably to which they have set themselves with any Application, was the reading of Heathen Authors, and when perhaps they have studied Philosophy and other Humane Learning for many Years, but never considered Divinity, as a Science, and have searched into it no farther, nor have any other Notion of it, than what they were taught in their Childhood or Youth, they look back upon their first Instructions as groundless, and fit only for Children, because they find little or nothing of them in those Authors, with whom they have been so long conversant; and whom upon many Accounts they have so just Reason to admire. This seems to be the Case of many who have read antient Heathen Authors, without the Regard, which ought always to be had to That, which is acknowledg'd by All; who have made any due Enquiry into these Things, to be the best Learning and of greatest Antiquity, and is no where to be had but from the Scriptures.

Others there are, who have often heard of the Names of *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Aristotle*, and of *Tully*, *Seneca*, and other Famous Writers; they find them frequently quoted, and commonly with Commendation, seldom to discover any Fault in them, unless it be in their Notions of Natural Philosophy, where Religion seems to be less concerned. They have heard too of the Greek and Latin Historians, and these, for any thing that they know or consider, may be as Faithful and as Antient as the best.

But tho' all these Authors have indeed very many Excellencies, yet we must not so far mistake, as to think all things Excellent which they deliver. I shall therefore, besides what I have already observed, make some farther Reflections in this place both upon the History, and upon the Philosophy of Heathen Nations, and then I hope I may be allowed to expostulate with the Adversaries of our Religion, concerning the Unreasonableness of their Proceedings, before I come to give a short Account of my present Undertaking.

I. Whatever knowledge almost we have now left of the Antiquities of other Heathen Nations, it comes conveyed down to us by the Greek Authors; and yet there is perhaps no Nation, which generally had a worse Reputation in matters of History, not only by common Fame and the Invectives of Satyrists, but from the Censures of the best Writers, and the Accusations which the Historians made  
one



# The Preface.

V

one of another, as † *Josephus* shews of many † *Vid. Jo-*  
 whose Works are now lost. (a) *Thucydides* him- *seph. contr-*  
 self could not escape free from Censure, who *Apion. lib*  
 complains of the negligence and unfaithfulness (a) *Thu-*  
 of the other Greek Historians, and he is thought *cyd. lib. 1.*  
 to point particularly at *Herodotus*, whom *Plu-*  
*tarch* Exposed in a set Discourse: tho' much in-  
 deed has been said in Vindication of *Herodotus*,  
 by *H. Stephens* and *Joac. Camerarius*; and the  
 Discoveries of Modern Travellers confirm ma-  
 ny things in this History, which were former-  
 ly thought incredible. (b) *Strabo* has observ'd, (b) *Strab.*  
 that the Greeks knew little of the most Fa- *Geogr. lib.*  
 mous Nations of *Asia*, except the *Persians*, *xv.*  
 and that *Homer* knew nothing of the Empire  
 of the *Assyrians* or *Medes*, but that he has o-  
 mitted the mention of the Magnificence of (c) *Sallust.*  
*Babylon*, *Ninaveh*, and *Ecbatane*, tho' he took *Bell. Casi-*  
 notice of the *Egyptian Thebes*, and of the (d) *Nemi-*  
 Wealth both of that Place and of *Phani-*  
*cia* (e) *Sallust* suspected that the *Athenians* too *nem Scri-*  
 highly Magnified their own Actions, And *piorum,*  
 there is in (d) *Vopiscus* a severe Charge against *quantum*  
 the Historians in general, that there is none of *ad Histori-*  
 them, who has not falsified in some thing or *am periti-*  
 other, particularly that as to *Livy*, *Sallust*, *Ta-*  
*citus* and *Trogus Pompeius*, it might be clearly *net, non a-*  
 proved upon them. And (e) *Pliny* has fur- *liquid esse*  
 dere, quod, *expulsi*

*Regibus, Populo Romano dedit Persena, nominatim comprehensum in-*  
*venimus, ne ferro, nisi in Agriculturâ, uterentur. Plin. Nat. Hist. lib.*  
*xxiv. c. 14.*

nished us with an instance of great Partiality in the Roman Histories, which conceal that *Porse-  
na* in his League with the People of *Rome*, obli-  
ged them to make no use of Iron, but for the  
Tilling of the Grounds: This *Pliny* Confes-  
ses was an express Article of that League:  
And how unlike is the Roman to the *Jewish*  
History in this very Instance? For in the  
Scriptures we find it twice mentioned, that  
the *Israelites* were reduced to that Condition,  
that they were permitted to have no Wea-  
pons of War. *Judg.* v. 8. *1 Sam.* xiii. 19.

(f) *Tacitus*  
*id Histori-*  
*ci, ut pu-*  
*dendum Vi-*  
*tori po-*  
*stet Gen-*  
*tium Popu-*  
*li, ut Pli-*  
*nium inge-*  
*genue fa-*  
*ctur. Grot.*  
*ad 1 Sam.*  
*xiii. 19.*

But the Roman (f) Historians had more re-  
gard to the Honour of the Roman Name  
than to Truth. And it is no Commendation  
of the same Historians, that they take so lit-  
tle notice of the *Jews*, and say so little to their  
Advantage, when they do speak of them,  
since *Josephus* has proved the Leagues be-  
tween the *Jews* and the *Romans*, and the Pri-  
vileges granted them by the *Romans*, be-  
yond all Denial, from the Tables then extant  
wherein they were contained.

\* *Liv. lib.*  
*6. 9. 1.*

\* *Livy* declares that most of the Monu-  
ments of Antiquity, whether Publick or Pri-  
vate, were destroyed, when the City was  
Burnt by the *Gauls*, and that for this Rea-  
son, his History to the rebuilding of the Ci-  
ty, near four hundred years after it was first  
Built, is but uncertain.

The most Ancient Writings, which had  
any Relation to History among the *Romans*,  
were

were their Funeral Orations: These were preserved in their several Families, which as (s) *Tully* confesseth, caused their History to be faulty, many things being inserted in this sort of Works, which were never done, false Triumphs, false Consulships, and false Genealogies. The *Annales* (h) *Maximi* were of good use, but they contained only the first Lines and rough Draughts of History, which appeared quite another thing, when it was filled up, and Represented entire with the Reasons and Circumstances of Affairs, according to the Pleasure or Skill of the Writer. But the Praises (i) of their Ancestors were sung in Verse at their Banquets, where strict Truth could rarely be heard. The Generals of Armies sometimes had (k) their Historians or Poets along with them, whom they liberally rewarded; we may be sure not for telling when they were beaten. *Atticus* (l) in *Tully* says, it was a thing of course to relate Matters of History, not according to Truth, but in such a manner, as might best shew the Wit and Eloquence of the Writers. *Tully* lays \* it down as a known and fundamental Rule of History, that an Historian should dare to say any Truth, but nothing that is false. Yet in an Epistle to *Luceius*, whom he entreats to Write the History of his own Ministration of Affairs, he earnestly beseeches † *Luceius*, in plain Terms to neglect the Laws of History in his Favour,

(s) *Lit. Brut.*

(h) *Id. de Orat. lib. 2.*

(i) *Id. Brut.*

(k) *Id. Pro Archia Poeta.*

(l) *Quoniam quidem concessum est Rhetoribus mentiri in Historiis, ut ut aliquid dicere possint argui-  
us Id. Brut.*

\* *De Orat. lib. 2.*

† *Epist. Famil. lib. 9.*

*Epist. 12. Ad Attic. lib.*

*4. Epist. 6.*



and to disregard Truth. And as if this had been a thing not unusual, or, at least, warrantable enough; he commends this Epistle in another to *Atticus*, and desires him to promote the Design. It has been remarked by some as a Fate upon *Cicero*, that this Testimony of his Vanity should remain, when the History, of which he was so desirous, is lost, if it was ever Written: But who knows how many such Epistles are lost, when the Histories are preserved? This is in common with the Greek and Latin Historians, that they put such Speeches as they think fit, into the Mouths of the several Persons concerned in the Actions they relate, which gives another View and Appearance to the Scene of Affairs, and acquaints us, not what such Persons said or thought, but what the Historian would have spoke, and what Advice he would have given, if he had been in their Place. *Herodotus* has much of the Simplicity of Antient times, his Speeches are Natural, containing for the most part but a bare Narrative of what was said or done, only the Persons tell their own Story. But of all the Speeches which are to be met withal in any History, there are none so Natural, or which have such plain Characters of Truth in them, as those in the Scriptures.

The Antiquities of *China* were destroyed about two hundred years before Christ, and from the several Relations given of that Matter

ter by different Authors, it appears, that the *Chineses* are rather willing to have it believ'd, that their old Books were in some strange manner or other preserv'd, than that they are able to make it out.

It was the Custom of the *Egyptians* to omit the mention of these Persons, of whom they had any dislike, or who had made themselves odious to them. Thus in the xxth Dynasty of their Kings there is a total Vacancy for the space of clxxviii Years, which the Learned Mr. Greaves, with great Probability Supplies with the Names of those Kings, who built the Pyramides, two whereof, *Cheops* and *Chephren*, as <sup>(m)</sup> *Herodotus* says, the *Egyptians* out of

Hatred to them, would not so much as name, <sup>(m) Herod. lib. 2. c. 128.</sup>

but called the Pyramides, which they had erected, the Pyramides of *Philiton*, a Shepherd, who in those days fed his Cattle there: The

which Hatred, says <sup>(n)</sup> Mr. Greaves, occasioned by <sup>(n) Diodor. sic. lib. 1. Greaves Pyramido-graph.</sup> their Oppressions, as *Diodorus* also mentions, might cause *Manethos* to omit the rest, especially *Sabachus* an *Æthiopian*, and an *Usurper*. But

whatever account is to be given of the *Egyptian* History in that particular, this makes the History of that Nation in general very uncertain, and may afford a sufficient Reason, why the *Jews* are either omitted, or misrepresented by Heathen Historians, who had what they relate of them from the *Egyptians*; and the *Hebrews* neither liv'd with the *Egyptians*, nor left them, upon such Terms, as to have their  
Story

Story faithfully told by a Nation, who would suffer nothing to pass down to Posterity, if they could help it, that was displeasing to them, when it happened; but if any thing were so Notorious, as not to be capable of being wholly stifled, they would be sure to vary and deface it with false Circumstances in the Reports, which they gave out concerning it.

And here I must once more complain of Mr. Blount, who, as if he had been an *Egyptian* Historian, that had an implacable Hatred of our Religion, professing to translate that place of *Tacitus*, which concerns the Original of the *Jews*, cuts his Translation short, and goes no farther than the Vilifying and false part of the Account, which *Tacitus* gives; for his Character of their Religion, and the Relation of what *Pompey* discovered upon his Entrance into the Temple, is omitted. And besides, that which he has translated, is far from being exact; but as I observed before, that in speaking of the Ark, he had made Sir *Thomas Brown* say, that *will not appear feasible*, which the Learned Knight had said, *will appear feasible*: so he has dealt no better with *Tacitus*, making him likewise deny what he had affirmed: *Tacitus* (°) says, *Hi ritus quoquo modo inducti Antiquitate defenduntur. These Rites, by what means soever introduced, are defended by their Antiquity: which* (p) *Mr. Blount* translates thus; *But by what means soever they have been introduced, they have no Antiquity.*

(o) *Tacit. Hist. lib. v.*

(p) *Orac. of Reason. p. 132.*

tiquty for their Patronization. This is to use the History of *Tacitus* as ill as he doth that of the Bible, and much worse than *Tacitus* himself has done the *Jews*. For if it be rightly understood, what *Tacitus* has written of the *Jews* proves a very remarkable Vindication of their Religion. He says indeed that they consecrated the Image of an Ass, but he says it only as a Report, which he confutes afterwards himself by acknowledging, that *Pompey*, when he entred into the Temple, found no Image in it; and giving an Account of their Religion, he says: *Egyptij pelraque Animalia, effigiesque compositas venerantur. Iudaei mente sola, unumque numen intelligunt. Profanos, qui Deum imagines mortalibus materiis, in species Hominum effingunt. Summum illud, eternum, neque mutabile, neque interiturum. Igitur nulla simulachra Urbibus suis, nedum Templis sunt.* Which is so contrary to what this Historian writes before in these words; *Effigiem animalis, quo monstrante, errorem sistimque depulerunt, penetrati sacravere*, that some have charged him with contradicting himself; but it is evident, that the Story of their Worshipping an Ass, is related as a Tradition, which is afterwards sufficiently confuted by his own Account of their Doctrine and Worship, and by what *Pompey* found, *Nulla nitus Deum Effigie, vacuam sedem, & inania Arcana.* Whatever his Design was, and however his obscure way of writing

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ing has made him to be misunderstood, there can hardly be any thing said more for the Truth and Honour of the *Jewish* Religion, than what *Tacitus* has delivered of it.

(q) *Pro*  
*Flacco.*

And if any one will compare, that which *Tully* hath said in the same <sup>(q)</sup> Oration of the *Greeks* and of the *Jews*, he must conclude, that what is spoken against the *Jews*, is rather to their Commendation, than to their Disgrace. *Tully* there declares the *Greeks* to be of no Credit nor Esteem, but unfaithful, and of the worst Reputation, even to a Proverb in their Testimonies and Oaths. He is careful not to involve the *Athenians* and *Lacedaemonians* in the common Scandal, who appeared for his Client, and gives a high Character of the *Massilians*, and would seem to confine his Discourse to the *Asiatick Greeks*, by whose own Confession, he says, the People of *Phrygia*, *Mysia*, *Caria*, and *Lydia* were proverbially Infamous. When he has expressed this Contempt of the *Greeks*, he falls next upon the *Jews*: But what has he to say of them? He calls their Religion a barbarous Superstition, and *Jerusalem*, a Suspicious and Railing City, and he pronounces the *Jewish* Religion to be unsuitable to the Splendor and Gravity, and the Customs of the *Romans*; he insinuates that they were a People not well affected to the *Roman* State, and urges the Conquest of them by *Pompey*, as an Argument against the Truth of their Religion.



gion. When so very Learned an Orator had nothing but these common Topicks of Slander to charge them withal, tho' it was for the Interest of his Cause to speak the worst he knew of them; what could be a greater Justification of the *Jews* and their Religion? One of the Accusations laid against *Flaccus*, whose Defence *Tully* had undertaken, was, that Summs of Gold having been wont to be sent out of *Italy*, and out of all the *Roman* Provinces to the Temple at *Jerusalem*, *Flaccus* had forbidden any to be exported from *Asia*. Here it concern'd *Tully* to expose the Worship of the *Jews*, and to vindicate the Prohibition relating to it; but he, who never spoke little upon any Subject, that could afford a Scope for his Eloquence, says so little here to the dispraise of the *Jews* and their Religion, that the Commendation of another had been less to their Honour. It is observable that *Tully* mentions nothing of their Worshipping an *Ass*, which was so groundless and foolish a Slander, that it is hard to imagine what could give occasion to it, and perhaps no better Account of it can be assigned, than that the Enemies of their Religion were resolved to fasten the worst and most ridiculous Falshood they could upon it. But if it may be permitted me to add a Conjecture to those which have been made by others; it seems probable, that the highest degree of Excommunication among the *Jews* being styled *Shammatha*, which is  
the

† Vid.  
Grot. &  
Ham. ad  
1 Cor. xvi.  
22.

the same with *Maran-Atha*, *Sham* signifying *Lord*, as † *Maran* also doth in the *Syriac* and other Languages; and *Atha* signifying *cometh*; *Atha* might either Ignorantly or Maliciously be mistaken for *Athon*, which signifies an *Ass*. And it is likely, that this Calumny might be first raised by some Body, who had been Excommunicated, and turned Apostate.

It would be a very wrong inference from what has been said, to conclude, that there is no certainty in the Greek and Latin, and other Heathen Historians: For the Circumstances of the Relation, and the Consent of divers Authors, may put most parts of History past doubt. But it ought to be considered, that those which have been mentioned, are exceptions, to which the Sacred Historians are by no means liable; they do not charge one another with Falshood, nothing can be discovered of Partiality in their Writings, but they tell the most disgraceful Truths of their Ancestors, and of themselves; and the History it self has so many publick Circumstances, that they clear it beyond all suspicion of Deceit: If the Names of some Men be omitted, upon particular occasions, in the Scriptures; we find them mentioned there upon others. And there is evident Reason, that the Names of infamous Men should in some Cases be omitted, and should not be inserted in Genealogies, and enrolled in the Registers of Honour:

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XV

nour. But when the Memory of Persons and Actions is totally suppress'd, this must extreamly abate the Credit of any History. The *Jews* are the only People in the World, that have had their Antiquities by an uninterrupted Tradition delivered down and preserved in an Authentick Book, unanimously asserted by the whole Nation, in all Ages, which they have never changed nor altered, but have in great numbers sacrificed their Lives in Testimony of it. If the Heathens in divers things contradict the History of the *Jews*, they contradict one another as much in the Accounts of their own Antiquities, and what they relate of the *Jews*, is upon uncertain and contrary Reports. If they conceal what concerns the *Jews*, it was their Custom to stifle that which did not please them. The Histories as well as the Religion of most other Nations were kept secret, and not communicated to the People, no Book of History among them was ever put into the hands of a whole Nation, with a strict Charge to every one to read and study it, as the Books of *Moses* were, when the Principal and most Memorable things related, were within the knowledge and Memory of all that read them. The *Jews* were under a necessity of preserving their Genealogies, with all imaginable Care and Exactness, if they would make good the Claim and Title to their Inheritances, so that the meanest among them could with  
the



(r) Herod.  
lib. vii. c.  
31.

the 'greatest certainty derive his Line from *Adam*, whereas the *Persian* Kings, as we learn from (r) *Herodotus*, could boast but of a short Descent, and the Kings and Emperours of the *Romans* and of other Nations, to advance their Pedigrees were forced to have recourse to fabulous Reports. And the Hea-then Accounts of the Original, not only of particular Families, but of the several Nations of the World, are acknowledged to be Fabulous, or, at the best, but very uncertain; by the most accurate Historians,

The Account of the Prophecies and Miracles contained in the Scriptures was impossible to be mistaken at first, and it has been transmitted with all the certainty that any History is capable of, to Posterity. And the Writers of the Old and New Testament all agree in the Account of the Creation, of the Deluge, of *Abraham* and the other Patriarchs, of the Bondage of the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, their Miraculous Deliverance from thence, and their Journeying into the Land of *Canaan*; they all frequently assert, suppose or imply the Truth of these things; there is a continued Series and Line of Truth observable throughout the whole Scriptures. But among Heathen Writers it is otherwise; they contradict one another in Matters of any considerable Antiquity, if they agree in some material Passages, it is commonly with much variation in the Circumstances, and with great

great Uncertainty and Doubtfulness; and the things in which they most agree, are such as have been taken from the Scriptures, which compose a Book, that if it were but for the Antiquity and Learning of it, is the most valuable of any Book in the World, and nothing but Vice and Ignorance, and that which is the worst sort of Ignorance, a Pretence to Learning could make it so much despised.

II. If the Histories of Heathen Nations be so little to be relied upon, their Philosophy will appear to be worthy of no more Regard, which, for any thing of Truth and Usefulness there is to be found in it, depends so much upon Historical Traditions. That Poetry is the most antient way of Writing, is not only asserted by Heathen Authors, but may with great probability be made out from the Scripture it self. Poets were the Chief upholders of the Religion and the Philosophy in use among the Heathens; both these were at the first taught in short Maxims, which, that they might be the better received, and the more easily retain'd in Memory, were put into Verse, without any farther Ornament than just what was necessary to give a clear and full Expression to their Notions and Precepts. (1) Socrates and the Philosophers of his time had a value for the Verses of Theognis, and those which go under the Name of Pythagoras, are at least as antient as (2) Chrysippus, who alleg'd their

(1) Xenoph. Conviv. & Memorab. lib. 1.

(2) Apud Arist. Metaph. lib. 1. c. 10.

Autho.

Authority. *Solon* himself wrote Elegies, whereof some Remains are still preserv'd. This gave the Poets a mighty Reputation, and we find not only *Solon*, but others of them quoted and appeal'd to by *Demosthenes* and *Æschines* in the Courts of Judicature, as well as by Philosophers in their Discourses. But the Poets for the more delightful Entertainment of the People, not only indulged themselves in that antient and useful way of Instruction by Fables (for he (u) was hardly esteem'd a Poet, who had been the Authors of none) but they became the Promoters of all manner of Superstitions and Idolatrous Worship; the Oracles were delivered in Verse, every Poet wrote something in Honour of the false Gods, and (w) *Socrates* himself, during his Imprisonment, made a Hymn in praise of *Apollo*. By which means the Original Notions of Religion and Vertue were so obscured and corrupted, that it was impossible in any Humane way to provide a sufficient Remedy. *Plato* complain'd of the Fictions of Poets; but when he set himself to recover Men to a true Sense and Notion of things by the help of some antient Traditions, which he had met withal, he fell into very absurd and sinful Errors, and both he and *Socrates* practis'd the Idolatries of their Country. They asserted many excellent Truths, which they had received, as they profess, from Antiquity; but whenever they argu'd any Point, they common-

(u) ἔγνωσαν, ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν δεῖ, οἷός μιν εἶναι, τοῦ ποιητῆς εἶναι, ποιῶν μὲν δὲ, ἄλλ' ἢ λόγους.  
Plat.  
Phæd.  
(w) Plat.  
ib.

commonly fell into mistakes, which oftentimes were of very ill consequence. So weak a thing is Humane Wisdom without the guidance of Divine Revelation! And of this the Philosophers were so sensible, that divers of them would have it thought, that they had some supernatural Assistance, tho' they were able to bring no sufficient Proof of it.

The Pretences of others deserve no Regard; their Impossures were too Notorious to admit of any Denial or Excuse. The Genius of *Socrates* may be supposed Worthy of more Consideration: yet it amounts to no more than this, that *Socrates* declared, that a certain Genius had accompanied him from his Childhood, which often forbad him to do what he had design'd; but never put him upon doing of any thing; and by the Information of this Genius, he often forewarned his Friends of the ill Success of what they were about to undertake. But after the best Search I have been able to make concerning this Genius of *Socrates*, I cannot but look upon it as an intricate and perplex Business. It may suffice in this place to observe, that

(1) *Xenophon* acquaints us, that when he advised with *Socrates*, whether he should follow *Cyrus* in his Expedition, *Socrates* sent him to the Oracle of *Apollo*; who, he said, was to be consulted; in obscure and uncertain Affairs; which affords no very advantageous Character either of *Socrates* himself, or of his Ge-

(x) *Xenoph.*  
*de exped.*  
*Cyri. lib.*

111.

(1) *Cic. de Divin. lib.* *nus.* (1) *Tully* informs us, that *Antipater* the Stoick, had made a Collection of such things

3.

as *Socrates's* Genius had discovered to him; but whatever they were, it appears that *Tully* had little regard to them. And this we are sure of, that all the Philosophy of *Socrates* ended in nothing but Uncertainties: For when he had just before his Death discours'd of the State after this Life, the most that he could say to his Friends in Conclusion, was,

(2) *Plato*  
*Phaed.*

(2) that they had a Noble Prize before them, great Hopes, and a glorious Venture, and therefore ought to possess and Charm their Minds with those Thoughts. The suggestions of his Genius signified little to him, if it left him no better instructed, as to a future State, in the last Moments of his Life.

It must be acknowledg'd that *Socrates* made great Improvements in the Moral and useful part of Philosophy: He was of an excellent Understanding; loving and belov'd of honest Men, and had Courage and Resolution enough to bear the Affronts and withstand the Malice of others; he minded none but the practical Doctrines of Philosophy, and tho' he never had travelled in search after Learning, as it was the Custom in those Ages for Philosophers to do, but scarce ever stirr'd out of *Athens*; yet he knew how to make the best use of the Notions which were brought to him by those, who had been in foreign Countries.

tries. It must be confess'd, that if *Plato* had not made *Socrates* the Author of things which he had never said, as not only <sup>(a)</sup> *Xenophon*, <sup>(a) A. Geß lib 14 c.</sup> but *Socrates* himself declar'd; but had given us as plain an Account of *Socrates's* Philosophy, as *Arrian* has of that of *Epictetus*, we might have known more of him than we now are able to do. But from what *Plato* and *Xenophon* have said of *Socrates*, we may be assur'd, that he did not refrain from Idolatrous Worship, nor reject the Heathen Oracles, nor deliver his own Doctrines without much Uncertainty and Diffidence. <sup>3. Diog. Laert. in Platon.</sup>

*Plato* carried his Philosophy to far greater Heights than *Socrates* had done, and the sublimer Parts of it were not to be discovered to the Vulgar; which were so difficult, that he declares to <sup>(b)</sup> *Dionysius*, that Men of Great Abilities, and as great Application and Industry, after the Study of thirty Years, at last, with much ado, understood them. Some things were not to be written at all, or so obscurely as not to be intelligible, if they should fall into the hands of Men, who were not fit to be trusted with the Secret of them; and he acknowledgeth that his best and only sure Argument for the Immortality of the Soul, without the Knowledge of which, all Philosophy can be but of little worth, was from <sup>(c)</sup> antient and <sup>(c) Epist.</sup> sacred Tradition. The Notions and Traditions, which *Plato* had brought from other Countries, with his delightful way of setting them



them forth, gain'd him great Reputation; some Attempts were made by himself and those of his Sect, to bring his Laws into practice, and to erect a Commonwealth after the Model of them; his Name and Memory was had in Great Esteem, his Birth-day was kept, and the Solemnity of it was renewed about two hundred Years ago, by some of his Admirers, as we are told by <sup>(d)</sup> *Ficinus*,

(d) *Comment. in Conviv. Plat. de Amore c. 1.*

one of that Society. But there is too much Alloy found in his Philosophy for any Endeavours to gain it a constant and general Reception. His Errors in some Cases are so notoriously gross and scandalous, that <sup>(\*)</sup> *Serranus* sets over against them in the Margin, *Prima Insania hominis delirantis*, and *Ponterosa Insania*.

(x) *Vid. Plat. de Repub. lib. v. Serran. edit.*

(e) *Orig. contr. Celf. lib. 2.*

<sup>(\*)</sup> *Aristotle* had studied twenty Years under *Plato*, but he so often confutes and contradicts his Master, that he has been charged with Ingratitude for it. And if *Socrates* and *Plato* did not firmly believe the Souls Immortality, *Aristotle* believ'd the contrary, as

(f) *vid. Jac. Billium in Greg. Nariam. O. rat. 3.*

(x) *Diog. Laert.*

(g) *Strabo lib. 13. Plut. in Sylla.*

(h) *Lic. To. pic.*

<sup>(1)</sup> many have prov'd out of several places in his Works. <sup>(2)</sup> His *Will* shews that he was both in his Practice and Judgment for the Idolatries of his Country. His Books by an Accident lay conceal'd, till they were brought to Rome upon the taking of *Athens* <sup>(3)</sup> by *Sylla*. But they were known to few Philosophers in <sup>(b)</sup> *Tully's* time. And a Learned Author has given an Account, what their Fate has been since.

The

## The Preface.

xxiii

The Sect of the Stoicks is observed by *Josephus* in the Account of his own Life, to have been like that of the Pharisees: which <sup>(1)</sup> *Grotius* says, is no wonder, since in *Cyprus*, which was *Zeno's* Native Country, there were always many *Jews*. But if the Stoicks were at first indebted to the *Jews*, they certainly afterwards borrow'd much more from the Christians. This Sect was very numerous, and had Men of great Note in the Primitive Ages of Christianity, who did not lose the opportunity offer'd them of improving it. But the Philosophers then began to carry on a Joint-Interest, and those who denominated themselves from any particular Sect, were no longer strict in adhering nicely to its Principles. For upon the preaching of the Gospel to the World, the Philosophers thought it concern'd them to review all that had been formerly written, to unite their Forces, and select those Notions out of every Sect, which were most plausible, omitting such as they saw would then give Offence: and it appears that they were greatly beholden to the Religion which they opposed and pretended to despise; it is evident, that they had read the Scriptures, and do sometimes make use of Terms which they had taken from thence, unknown to former Philosophers. But Philosophy after all their Endeavours still retaining many Errors, and wanting that Evidence and Authority, which is the foundation of all true Religion, could never



maintain its ground against that Religion, which was preach'd by those, whom they contemned as ignorant Men; but which in a short time wrought such a Reformation in the World, as the Philosophy of all Ages had been never able to effect.

(x) *Tenui*  
*Apol: c. 47*

It is not to be denied that there were many great and eminent Examples among the *Heathens*; but then there were always as great Enormities allow'd in the most civiliz'd Nations. Philosophy was (\*) prohibited by three of the Principal States of *Greece*, by the *Thebans*, the *Spartans*, and the *Argives*. And the *Romans*, who have set so many Famous Examples to the World, were little oblig'd to Philosophy: for all their Worth and Greatness was rais'd upon the Stock only of common Notions, the Traditions that they had receiv'd with the rest of Mankind, and the Laws brought from *Athens*, which were enacted by *Solon*, who had been in *Egypt* at a time, when the *Jews* were there in sufficient Numbers. But it was a long while before Philosophers were suffered at *Rome*, they had been (k) expell'd by the Senate: *Tully* was the first that brought Philosophy into any Credit there, and by the Apologies which he often makes for his giving himself to the Study of it, we may perceive under what Prejudices it then lay among the *Romans*, and that there was need of all his Wit and Eloquence to gain it Admission.

(k) *AGell.*  
*lib. xvii.*  
31,

A strict Discipline both in Peace and War, great Application and Industry, by which they improved their common Notions, and arriv'd to wonderful Experience and Dexterity in the Management of Affairs, a zealous Love of their Country, and an unparall'd Constancy, manifest in all their Actions, and especially in the Observation of their Laws, rais'd the *Romans* to that mighty Height and Extent of Empire. But that which they retain'd of Truth in relation to Matters of Religion had been so abused and disguis'd with Fabulous Corruptions, that at length it had generally lost all Belief amongst them. (1) *Tully* (1) *Pro Clu-*  
made no Scruple at a publick Tryal in a Court *entis.*  
of Judicature, to deny the Punishments of the Wicked in a future State, as a ridiculous Fiction, which shews a strange Corruption of Principles in that Age; when he could propose to himself to gain his Cause by speaking in that manner. In another Oration, he says, (2) *Non semper superet vera illa & directa* (2) *Pro*  
*Ratio, vincat aliquando cupiditas, voluptasque* *M. Calin*  
*rationem.* That this should be spoken in a publick Pleading by one of the Gravest and most Learned of all the *Romans*, shews how little either the Philosophy which he had studied, or the *Roman* Laws themselves could do towards the Establishment of Vertue, and that the Modesty of Youth, and the Vertue and Honour of Families must be secur'd upon some better Principles. Afterwards he adds: *Verum*

*rūm siquis est, qui etiam meretriciis Amoribus interdictum juventuti putet, est ille quidem valde severus: Negare non possum, sed abhorret non modo ab hujus seculi licentia, verum etiam a Majorum consuetudine atque concessis.* I believe there is scarce any man so far lost to all Shame among Christians, that he would be willing to hear himself so defended in a Publick Court, or any Judge that would admit of such a Defence: which is a manifest Argument of the Excellency of the Christian Religion, that it lays such a powerful Restraint upon Men. But this looseness of Manners was the fatal Fore-runner of that horrid and monstrous Lewdness, which afterwards, like a Leprosy, overspread the Roman Empire. The Conspiracies of that Time, which so much endanger'd the State, were contriv'd by Libertines, and no greater Cruelties have ever been committed than by this Sort of Men, when once they have got into Power; as may be seen in *Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, &c.* And *Tully* himself perhaps might feel the Effects of these Encouragements to Vice, being kill'd by a Villain, whose Life he had formerly saved by that Eloquence, which was sometimes employ'd, as if he had been retain'd against Virtue.

It must be owned that *Tully* has in many places of his Works laid down admirable Rules of Vertue, but then it is with little or no Regard to such Principles as are the  
—only

only sure Foundations of a Vertuous Life,  
viz. the Fear of God, and the Expectation  
of Rewards or Punishments after Death;  
and such was the defect of his Philosophy,  
that he could be positive and certain in no-  
thing. *Seneca*, as he professeth, has taken  
many of his best Precepts from *Epicurus*, which  
without a due Consideration had of a God  
and a Providence, are no better than Pru-  
dent Cautions against Temporal Evils, either  
of Body or Mind. *Seneca* many times di-  
verts rather than Instructs, what he  
says is always fine, but not always So-  
lid, he dances upon the surface, accord-  
ing to *Quintilian's* Censure of him, but sel-  
dom descends to the depth of things; and  
it were well if that Character, which he  
has given of *Seneca's* style, might not be ap-  
plied to his Sense, *abundat dulcibus Vitiis*, a  
luscious Poison sometimes diffuseth it self in  
his Writings. *Seneca* (\*) derides the subtilty and  
trifling both of *Zeno* and *Chrysippus*; but he  
did it seems, think himself more concern'd  
to expose them for being Teachers of ill  
Doctrins: tho upon this account they were  
so very scandalous, that *Sextus* (xx) *Emperi-*  
*cus* endeavours to prove from their Words, that  
there is no real and certain Difference be-  
twixt Vertue and Vice.

(x) *Sen. B.*  
*pist. 82. de*  
*Benefic. lib.*  
*c. 3, 4*

(xx) *Sext.*  
*Empir.*  
*Pyrrh. Hy-*  
*por. lib. 3.*  
*c. 24, 25.*

The bare knowledge of the Christian Do-  
ctrine even without a sincere belief of its  
Authority, has taught Men to abhor those  
Crimes

Crimes which were approved of by the Philosophers, and Practised in the Wisest Heathen Nations: and when things notoriously Evil were receiv'd and taught by those, who did and said so many things well, it is Evident, that what was good was not owing so much to the strength of their own Reason, as to some higher Principle. I will here give but one Instance, and it shall be concerning the Lawfulness of killing Infants, or exposing them to be starved or destroyed. This was the express Doctrine of

(n) *Plat.*  
*de Repub.*  
*lib. v. A.*  
*ristot. Politic.*  
*lib. viii.*  
*c. 16.*

(o) *Ælian.*  
*lib. ii. c. 7.*

(p) *Dionys.*  
*Halicarn.*  
*lib. 2.*

(q) *Tacit.*  
*Hist. lib. v.*  
*de Morib. Germ.*  
*cum notis*  
*Lips.*

(r) *Seneca.*  
*de Ira lib.*  
*v. c. 15.*  
*Plut. in Lyc.*  
*urg.*

(s) *Fragm.*  
*apud Stobæ.*  
*Serm. 73.*

(<sup>n</sup>) *Plato*; and *Aristotle* who contradicts him in most other things, follows him in this. Indeed this was so general a Practice, (<sup>o</sup>) that it is taken particular Notice of that the *Thebans* had a Law to forbid it. (<sup>p</sup>) *Romulus* made a Law to regulate this Practice, and to hinder it in some Cases; (<sup>q</sup>) *Tacitus* observes it as a thing deserving his Remark, that this was not practised either by the *Jews* or the *Germans*, tho' the latter had a Custom of casting their Children into the *Rhine* for a tryal of their legitimacy. But that which

is more strange is (<sup>r</sup>) that *Seneca* and *Plutarch* who liv'd since the Preaching of the Gospel, should approve of such Barbarous Cruelty. (<sup>s</sup>) *Hierocles*, who as *Lactantius*

informs us, was well acquainted with the Scriptures, was contented to say that it is natural and answerable to the ends of Marriage to bring up all, or at least, most Children;

Children; which was a great Concession in a Philosophier. *Solon* was as Famous for his Philosophy as for his Laws, and the Legislator to that State, which was the Seat and proper Soil, as it were of Philosophy, by an express Law (\*) indemnified all that killed their Children, and the Philosophers were ever true to these Principles.

(\*) *Sext. Empiric. l'yrre. Hy. por. lib. 3. c. 24.*

I have insisted upon this the more not only because it is an evident instance of the insufficiency of Heathen Philosophy, but because some Readers may be as difficult to believe a thing, which must needs seem very Monstrous to Christians, as (†) *Lipsius's* Friend was, to whom he wrote a long Epistle, to convince him that this was the Practice of Heathen Nations, and agreeable to the Judgment of their Philosophers: So that many of the Adversaries of the Christian Faith, may perhaps owe their Lives to that Religion which they Blaspheme.

(†) *Ad Eclogas Cent. 1. Epist. 85.*

I have purposely avoided too curious an enquiry into the lives of the Philosophers, and rather chose to cast a Veil over what not only their Enemies but their Friends have said of them. The Practice of Men is generally worse than they confess it ought to be; they never live above their Rule and Profession; it is well if in most things, they do not fall much short of it; and if their Principles be Bad, what must we expect from their Examples? But the Actions of the Philosophers



phers concerned those with whom they lived, our Business is with their Writings; and I need not fear the Censures of Learned and Judicious Men in any thing I have said of them; for they will acknowledge it to be Truth, and others ought to be told so, that they be no longer willing to change the Bible for the Works of Philosophers, which they commonly read and understand as little as they do the Bible it self.

The utmost that Philosophy could reach, was no farther than to uncertain Hopes and doubtful Arguments. But our Saviour and his Apostles *taught with Authority*, and not as did the Philosophers; *The Words which they spake, they were Spirit, and they were Life*; They came with full Power, and had their Credentials from Heaven to produce, which are the same that we now allege for the Authority of their Commission. And what can be more certain than plain Matter of Fact, which is clearly prov'd by undeniable Circumstances, and by Witnesses beyond Exception, and which is of that Nature, that all the Divine Attributes are engag'd for the Truth of it? It is strange that Men should pretend to fetch their Infidelity from the Depths of Philosophy, and the *Oracles of Reason*; as if any floating, confus'd Notions might not serve for objections. But it is to the advantage of a bad Cause, to involve it in tedious and unnecessary Disputes, to make Digressions  
into

into doubtful Points of Criticism and Philosophy, to amuse the Reader, and draw him off from the main Question: Whereas a good Cause may commonly be brought to a clear and short Issue. The present Controversy will admit of all kinds of Learning, but has no need of it. My Business therefore has been to free this Matter, as much as may be, from all the Intricacies of Learning, to reduce it to plain Circumstances of Fact, whereof every man may be capable of making a true Judgment, and to bring it to that very Case, in which St. John argues; *He that believeth not God hath made him a Liar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son.* 1 John v. 10.

And how can we forbear to adore the Wisdom and Goodness of God, who by the wonderful Dispensations of his Providence, has not suffered himself to be *without Witness* in any Age or Nation? If Idolatry spread it self from *Egypt* into many other parts of the World, as (\*) *Herodotus* and *Diodorus Siculus* have shewn, we have the more reason to admire the wisdom of divine Providence in appointing *Egypt* to be the place where the People of *Israel* did so long sojourn, and where so many signal Miracles were wrought to give a check and stop to Idolatry in the very Source and Fountain of it, if Men had not been beyond all measure obstinate in their Folly and Disobedience.

(\*) *Herod.*  
*lib. ii. c.*

43. *Gr. Di-*  
*od. Sic. lib.*

And



And the same goodness of God has not been wanting to any Nation of the World. For, (u) tho' the Law of *Moses* was peculiarly designed for the People of *Israel*, yet provision was made for the receiving of all such as were willing to become partakers of it, to the observation even of their ceremonial and typical Service; notie besides the *Israelites* were required to observe it, but neither were any excluded from it. And by the constitution of the *Jewish* Law and Government, as well as by the Providence of God in all his Dispensations towards that People, effectual Care was taken that all the necessary points of Religion which concern Mankind in general, should by them be communicated to the rest of the World. But the Christian Religion was by its original Institution and Design equally extended to all Nations, and was soon propagated all over the World. Nations but lately known to us have been constant objects of the Divine Care, and had early Discoveries made to them of the reveal'd Will of God, as I have proved at large by the Testimonies of Protestants as well as of Papists. And it is very observable, which

(u) *Varen.* (u) *Varenius* has remark'd, that the *Jesuits*, in some places at least, have Preached the substance of Christianity without the mixture of many of those Doctrins, which are peculiar to the Roman Communion; and he owns that their Success has been very great.

## The Preface.

xxxiii

III. It (w) was the opinion of a convert-<sup>(w) seemed</sup>  
 ed Mandarin, *That those who had any occasion* <sup>Hist. of</sup>  
*to hear the Law of God, or to read the Books* <sup>China.</sup>  
*which treat of it, and did not judge it to be* <sup>part. 2</sup>  
*true, wanted Brains, and were void of Under-* <sup>13.</sup>  
*standing.* And it might well be thought in-  
 credible, if we did not find it true in Expe-  
 rience, that when Christianity has gained so  
 much upon Heathens, and (x) *Turks* have <sup>(x) Risaule</sup>  
 become its Profelytes and Martyrs, even in <sup>Hist. of</sup>  
*Constantinople* it self; it should notwithstand- <sup>the Otto-</sup>  
 ing grow into Contempt among profess'd <sup>man Emp.</sup>  
 Christians, who dispute every Article of the <sup>lib. 2. c. 11.</sup>  
 Faith, into which they were Baptized, and <sup>12.</sup>  
 every Commandment, which they have un-  
 dertaken, and solemnly vowed to obey.

But do they not prove what they pretend?  
 As little of that as may be; but they say it,  
 and say it often and confidently, and perhaps  
 sometimes wittily, and this must pass for  
 Proof. But do Men love, or will they endure  
 to be talk'd or jested out of any thing that  
 is dear to them but their Souls? Let the  
 Wit be what they please, or can fancy it to  
 be, certainly they must be much too fond of it  
 who can be contented to lose not only their  
 best Friend, but Heaven it self for a Jest,  
 which perhaps, after all, would be little taken  
 notice of on another Subject, and has nothing  
 to recommend it but Profaneness, and that a-  
 lone which should make it abhorr'd, causeth  
 it to be admired.

d

As

As there is nothing so bad but some may pretend to speak for it (as a Panegyrick has been written upon *Busiris*, and another upon *Nero* so nothing is so excellent but it may be spoken against; and if no Right or Title must be allowed as true or certain, which may be questioned or disputed, it is hard to say what any Man can have that he may call his own. But let it be consider'd that there is little Learning or Judgment required in advancing or maintaining new and strange Doctrines, and in rejecting the old. Things may be so plain, as for that very Reason to be hard to prove, because there is nothing plainer to prove them by; a bold denial of the truth of our Senses and Faculties may seem to promise something of more than ordinary subtilty; though there be no more in it than this, that he who resolves to deny the very grounds and foundations of all Reasoning, has taken effectual care not to be confuted. It is a mistake to think that it is easiest to speak upon a common Subject; a Man indeed can never want something to say upon such a Subject, but he is prevented in what he should say, it is known before-hand, and expected from him: The nicest thing of all is to enforce and improve known Arguments, and to give new Life, and a better Genius, as it were, to that which has been said a thousand times before. It is usually easiest to discourse on the wrong side of a Question, because there never is so little scope  
for

for Fancy and Invention, as when a Man is confined to strict Truth; Error will admit of all Extravagancies, but Truth is a severe and uniform thing, and there are those whom any Extravagancy almost will please, for the novelty of it. There may be some Art required to make a known Story delightful in the relating, but News is commonly welcome, tho' it be never so ill told, and the most beautiful and useful Creatures are little regarded, when the worst of Monsters are the more gazed at the more they be deformed. Let those who make such a noise with their Singularity, but change the Subject, and try how it will succeed with them, they will soon find the difference, and perceive that they will cease to be in vogue, when they have no longer the vanity and ill nature, and vices of Men on their side.

It is with our Minds in this respect, as it is with our Bodies, when once they are well supplied with all that is necessary or convenient, they begin to loath wholesome Food, and to seek out for varieties of Luxury, and are fond of any thing that may please them to their hurt. It is thus in every Art and Science, especially in such as all Men think themselves more or less concern'd to know. Men first were contented to speak so as to be understood, and to express their meaning plainly and naturally with Truth and Simplicity to one another; afterwards speaking became an Art, and

and at last in the best and most elegant Languages, it degenerated into nothing but Affectation, and all the ridiculousness of a false Eloquence. The same thing happened in Philosophy; the *Scepticks* carried this innovating humour to the utmost Extravagancy; for, the Primitive Traditions being obscured and corrupted, and every Succession of Philosophers striving to set up for themselves, and to outgo each other, they had brought it to that pass, that *Tully*, who knew as well as any Man, says, that nothing can be more absurd than what some of the Philosophers held, but the Author of the *Leviathan* proceeds farther, and observes that (\*) *no Living Creature is subject to the Privilege of Absurdity but Man only, and of Men, those are of all most subject to it that profess Philosophy*. And if we will not believe him upon his word, he has given us his Example for it; few Men, I think, having written more extravagant things than he has done in every part of Philosophy; if Religion were set aside, he would never have escaped among the Philosophers and Mathematicians of any Age; he disputed the Principles of Geometry, as well as the Foundations of all Religion, and both with a like Success. He calls *Absurdity* the Privilege of Mankind, a strange Privilege! which he has made the most of. But since with a little time the Novelty and Varnish of his odd Opinions are worn off, they are not now, that I have per-

(x) *Levi-*  
*ath. part*  
1. c. 5.

perceived, so much regarded, but have been forced to give way to other Notions which are as Bad, and have nothing more to recommend them, but that they are of a later Date and a newer Fashion.

There is little Reason why any one should value himself for talking against received Doctrins, and persuading others to what they are already but too much inclin'd. But to rescue Antient and despised Truths, and bring them into Reputation; to convince the Judgments, and gain the Affections of Men, to make the same Truths always please and always appear with a new and amiable Lustre; this is indeed a difficult Task. For a Man to cultivate the Principles of Vertue, and improve the Growth of it to make every subject, which he treats of to become the better for him, and to thrive and flourish under his Hands, is an Argument of true Learning and substantial Knowledge; but there is no Skill required to make the weeds of Vice grow apace; all the Art is in destroying them, and it is a sign of a little Mind when one is able to distinguish himself only by Singularity, by an odd Dress, or a new Mode, when his Wit borders upon Madness and Prophaneness, and his Learning is all out of the way. Many who are neither Heterodox in Religion, nor fond of being singular in any thing else, have shewn an extraordinary Sagacity, and a surprising variety of excellent Learning upon Sub-



jects which are unusual and in themselves but little considerable. And I will not deny but that some of the Men of Singularity have no Worse Design than to gratify a little Vanity, and to appear like some body in the *Commonwealth of Learning*, as if Learning were a mere Trifle, a very Play-thing, to be employ'd to no serious and useful Purpose, but would serve only to give men occasion to talk, and to be talk'd of. This is call'd *Pedantry* and I know not why that should go under a better Name, which is of a worse Nature, and join the Trifling of Pedantry to the Mischief of Irreligion. If this Sort of Men would but busie themselves no worse than *Tiberius* did, when he examined, who was the Mother of *Hecuba*; what Name *Achilles* went by, whilst he hid himself in Womans Apparel, and what Songs those were, which the *Sirens* were wont to sing; those indeed are profound Enquiries, and so worthy of them, that it were pity they should be disturb'd in such ingenious Disquisitions. But if Men will be for removing Foundations, and rejecting established Doctrines, and denying the Principles of Religion; it is fit they should be told, that there is neither Wisdom nor Learning in this; and those who are acted themselves by a Spirit of Contradiction, have the least Reason of any Men to take it amiss to be contradicted, tho' it be in never so plain a manner. In short, it is possible that some  
may

may be well Skill'd in Tricks and Artifices, who know little of the substantial and useful Part of the Law, and it is certain that many who talk boldly of the highest Points of Religion, are ignorant even of the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ. There surely can be little need for any Man to have recourse to Error and Extravagancy for the exercise and improvement of his Faculties, they must be strange Faculties to want such Improvement. Truth it self is infinite, tho' always uniform and consistent in every part, and will afford room enough for the free use of Reason, in examining and considering the Nature of things, in stating particular Cases by general Rules, in the Study of Antiquity, and in explaining particular Texts of Scriptures, according to the Analogy of Faith, and the Tenour of sound Doctrine. And it may justly be look'd upon as a Defect of Judgment and good Sense, or be suspected (which is much worse) of want of Sincerity and a good Conscience, when Men can find nothing, by which they may recommend themselves to the World, but by setting up for Novelties in Religion. For what Man of an honest Meaning, and of sufficient Abilities and strength of Parts, to proceed secretly in direct and approved Paths, would run out of the way by Cunning and Artifice, to steal a despicable Reputation, which another would be asham'd of, and of which the best

thing that can be said, is, that, as it is never  
worth the having, so it is never lasting.

After the Reception and Establishment of  
the Gospel for so many Ages, we are call'd up-  
on to prove the Grounds and Principles of  
our Religion all over again, and we will ne-  
ver decline a thing so easy to be done. But  
the Modern Infidels have changed the  
State of the Question: The Truth of the Mir-  
acles wrought by our Saviour and his Disci-  
ples was never deny'd by the Adversaries of  
Christianity of old; this was not disputed by  
Celsus, Porphyry, Pagan, and Julian the  
Apostate; if some of them did upon any oc-  
casion insinuate the contrary, that was so ma-  
licious and groundless a Calumny, that they  
were neither able to insist upon any Proof of  
it, nor to reconcile it to what they them-  
selves had elsewhere said. The Matter of  
Fact was acknowledged by the ancient Jews,  
and has been confess'd by their Posterity; they  
could not contradict the Miracles, but de-  
nied the Confidence of them: tho' the  
Men we have to deal withal, to make clear  
work with much Confidence, but with as  
much Ignorance, deny both. Let them know  
then, that they are in part confuted by the  
Enemies of our Religion; and it were strange  
if our Friends should sit in the other Part.

of John A. has shown us, that  
nothing is so common as to see  
fled on, and to see no more of it. 14. 1

IV. I have here endeavoured to do some Right to our Religion, and to satisfy all such as are willing to be satisfied in the most difficult Points of it. And tho' I have discoursed at large upon the Subjects of which I treat, and not in the usual Method of *Objection* and *Answer*; yet I have always had my eye upon the *Objections*, which I have known that I could think at material. But to bring in *Objections* at every Turn in plain Discourses, such as these were design'd to be, as far as the Matter would permit, might have been of no good Consequence. A man may very well be guided in the right Road without having all the wrong and dangerous Paths describ'd to him; and he may be directed how to recover or preserve his Health without being presented with a Catalogue of Diseases; he may get safe to his Journeys end, without knowing all the Bogs and Precipices by which he might have miscarried; and in order to be well, there is no need that he should be acquainted how many ways there are of being sick. I have heard of some that read *Objections* without the *Answers*; as lately a shameless Writer has produced the *Objections* of *Celsus* and *Faustus*, against the Canon of Scripture, without taking Notice of the *Answers* given by *Origen* and *St. Austin*, from whom he had them. And tho' both the *Objections* and *Answers* should be read; yet *Objections* are commonly in few Words, and are often remembred, when the  
Answers

Answers are forgotten. And indeed, tho' I were never so Expert at it, I have no Ambition to try my strength in tying a knot, that I may shew my Skill in unloosing it. But to provide against all exceptions, as much as it is possible, I have proved at large, that if all Objections could not be answered, this would be no sufficient Reason to reject or question the Authority of our Religion.

I cannot say I must confess, that I have been able, or have been much solicitous to obviate all the Cavils which may have been started; many have been given up, and others seem never to have been seriously urged. An Author who had more Learning it seems, than Judgment to spare, wrote a Book to prove that there were Men before Adam; but this was rejected by Judicious Men as a very absurd and Ridiculous Conceit, particularly by *Grotius*, as the Author complains, who yet afterwards retracted it himself. Some notwithstanding are so fond of any Paradox that they are still for maintaining it. I confess it agrees admirably with a Tradition of the *Arcadians*, that their Ancestors were before the Moon, and if any Man should pretend, that this might very well be true, according to the *Cartesian Hypothesis*, by attempting to prove that *Arcadia* might be inhabited before the Moon of a Luminous became an *Opake* Body; in so curious an Age, he must have ill Luck if he should want his

Apologia

Ap-

Applauders. If some Object, that the Originals of the Books of Scripture in the Hand-Writing of the several Authors are not still remaining; doth this deserve to be answered till they can produce the Original Writings of all other Books? Or at least of all or any that are as Antient, as even the last written of the Books of the New Testament? Would they have an Office erected to prove the Titles to all Estates by Original Deeds? and upon what Period of time will they fix for the Date of them, which will admit of any Comparison with the Date of the Manuscript Copies now extant of the Scriptures? Some have alleged that the Sea through which the *Israelites* passed is not Red: But they may be pleased to know that Religion is nothing concerned in what has been written on both sides upon this subject, for it is not called the *Red Sea* in the *Hebrew*, but the *Sea of Weeds* with which it abounds. It has the denomination of the *Red Sea* from the Greeks, however it came by it (for the Criticks are not agreed about it) and is best known by that Name, which is therefore made use of by the *Septuagint*, and in our own and other Translations, which herein follow St. *Luke* and the Apostle to the *Hebrews*. Men must call things by known Names if they will be understood, whatever gave the first occasion to those Names. As to many Objections let Men but do *Moses* the



the same Right, which they would do *Thucydides* or *Tacitus*, and we need desire no more, tho' they should not allow for the great distance of Time between them: Indeed they might live in the same Age, for all that many of these Objectors know and be next Neighbours. I have known divers Objections made, which the looking only into the Bible would answer, and many proceed from the want of being Conversant in it. Some have supposed that they had great matter of Objection from Christ's Cursing the Fig-tree, and causing it to wither away: But never so little Reflection might serve any one to take notice how merciful a thing it was in the Son of God, and how suitable to the Gospel which he Preach'd for him to shew his Power of punishing upon a Tree rather than upon a Man: it was then and is at any time as easy for him to punish his Revilers, as it was to Curse this Tree, or as it can be for them to Revile him, tho' they be never so ready at it: But to manifest himself to be the Saviour not the Destroyer of mankind: He Cured all manner of Diseases and raised the Dead; but never took away the Life of any Man, nor inflicted any Disease, he spared his worst Enemies the Scribes and Pharisees, and Punished their Hypocrisie in the Emblem only of a Fig-tree flourishing in Leaves before the Time and Season of Figs, and thereby promising very much an Early

ly Fruit but having none; it made a show of Figs out of Season, but had nothing to answer so fair an Appearance.

Other Objections which may seem more considerable, have been confuted even to a Demonstration. Cavils which have been raised concerning the (\*) quantity of Matter, which will be required to Compose the Bodies of all Men at the Resurrection, and concerning the (†) Bottomless Pit, have been demonstrated to be frivolous. That the (‡) Capacity of the Ark was sufficient to contain Noah and his Family, with the Beasts and Food for them; and that the (¤) Encrease of Mankind might extend to so great Numbers in no longer a Compass of Years than the Scriptures in any Instance Assign, are things which have been often proved beyond any possibility of a Confutation; and whatever force there may seem to be in Objections of this Nature, they are to be reckoned among the *Vulgar Errors*, and in that Number Sir Thomas Brown has placed some of them, for Learned Men have been long ago ashamed to make them; and this, one would think, should cause others to be more Modest and Cautious in their Objections against the Scriptures, when such as have the Appearance of the greatest strength in them, being once brought under strict Examination prove to be evidently false. And if they find they have been mistaken and are willing

(x) *Tacquet. Geom. Pract. lib. 3. c. 20. Probl. 2.*

(y) *Sir Sam Moggland's View of Conf. p. 95.*

(z) *Buteo de Area Noe. Kircher de Arc. Noe. Sir W. Raleigh Hist. lib. 2. c. 7. §. 9. Bishop Wilkin's Real Character Part 2. c. 5.*

(a) *Peterson's Doctr. Temp. lib. 9. c. 14.*

ling to be undeceived; this will go so far towards their Conviction that I cannot but hope that the Consideration here proposed, may be of some weight with them.

Thus far, methinks, at least I may hope to prevail upon those who will not be convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion, that they will no longer imagine it Safe or Prudent to speak lightly and profanely of it. Religion is too serious a thing, and of too great Concernment to Mankind, to be exposed to the Scorn of every one, that thinks he can make a Jest. And that which is too hard, for their Reason will be in little danger of their Raillery, but will rather receive an additional Confirmation from it. The best and most sacred things are always most Capable of Dishonour and Affronts; for to Affront and Abuse any Person or Thing is to endeavour to make it appear bad, and it is the security of some things and some Men, that they cannot be represented worse than they are. It is in any ones Power to Affront the greatest Prince, and a Man of the most eminent Vertue may be most easily abused, but no Treason can be spoke against a Beggar, and it is the hardest matter to find out how to disgrace him of whom nothing can be said worse than he deserves. It is a kind of Testimony given to Religion, and an acknowledgment paid to Vertue, when Men so industriously labour to vilify it. For

how can that be disparaged which is of no Worth or Excellency? Or why should Men endeavour to bring that into discredit, which hath not at present a confessed Reputation? Whether this be a deserved Reputation or no, they may question if they think fit, but then let them make it a serious question, and not to be decided by the loudest noise. But here is the mischief, they have no Patience to attend to the Force of an Argument, or to go on with a dispute; but a Cavil is soon started, and Objections are more easily raised than answered upon any Subject, and then they trample with wonderful Scorn, and Triumph upon that which they conceive is so miserably overcome: but alas the Victory is over themselves; nothing is either the more or the less true for their believing or disbelieving it, and Religion is always the same how profanely soever it may be spoken of.

We have no design to impose upon any Man's Faith; but if there be Reason in what we say, it may well be expected from Reasonable Men, that they should hearken to Reason. Religion is Reason and Philosophy, as the Fathers often speak, the best and truest Philosophy. And I am persuaded, how much soever I may have failed in the performance, that the Christian Religion is capable of, being proved with such clear and full Evidence, even to ordinary Understandings, as to make all Pretences of Arguing against it, appear to be as ridiculous as they are impious.

This image shows a blank, aged, cream-colored page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf from an old book. The paper has a textured appearance with numerous small, dark spots and larger, irregular stains, particularly along the right edge and bottom. The overall color is a light beige or off-white, with some darker areas suggesting foxing or water damage. There is no text or other markings on the page.

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THE  
REASONABLENESS  
AND  
CERTAINTY  
OF THE  
Christian Religion.

BOOK II.

CHAP. I.

*Of Humane Reason.*

**H**AVING in the former Book proved the  
Divine Authority of the Scriptures,  
I proceed in this to clear such points,  
as are commonly thought most liable to ex-  
ception in the Christian Religion, and to  
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propose some considerations which may serve to remove such prejudices, and obviate such cavils, as are usually raised against the Holy Scriptures. But before men venture upon making Objections against the Scriptures, they would do well first to consider the compass and strength of their own Parts and Faculties, and to observe in how many things they daily find themselves deceived; how many men there are who understand much more than themselves, and how much folly and ignorance there is in the wisest men. Those commonly that raise objections against the Scriptures are as confident in the management of them, as if they understood all things besides, and therefore conclude, that must needs be false, which they do not understand; not considering, how very reasonable it is to suppose, that God should command and reveal many things, the Natures and Reasons of which we may not be able to comprehend. This must be granted by every man who believes God to be infinitely wise, but doth not think himself to be so, and acknowledgeth God's sovereignty over him. For as he is infinitely wise, he may reveal things above our capacities, and as he is the supream Lord and Governor of the world, he may command us what in his infinite wisdom he shall see fitting, tho we may not perceive the Reason and Design of it. And yet this is the utmost, that upon a due examination,  
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many of the objections against the Authority of the Scriptures amount to, that there are several things in them, of which some men think no clear account can be given, and others, which seem to them unworthy of God.

Now what is the meaning of this way of objecting? and where lies the force of such Arguments but in this, that it is not to be conceived, that God would reveal or command any thing, with which they are not satisfied, or which they cannot perfectly understand? This is all the strength of this sort of objections. There is all the Reason in the world to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, if they did not contain things, which these men in their great wisdom think should not be there, if they were his word; which is to make their own understanding the measure and *Criterion* of Divine Revelation. And some have turned Scepticks for as good Reasons, and others have been Atheists upon the same Principles; finding as much fault with the System of the World, and the Order and contrivance of the parts of it, as the Deist doth with the Scriptures; they have renounced all belief of a God, upon the same grounds upon which he disbelieves the Christian Religion. To convince men therefore of the Narrowness and Weakness of Humane Reason, I shall shew,  
I. That in some things each side of a Contradiction seems to be demonstrable. II. That every man believes and experiences several  
B 2 things



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things which in the Theory and speculative Notion of them would seem as incredible as any thing in the Scriptures can be supposed to be. III. That those who reject the Mysteries of Religion, must believe things much more incredible.

I. In some things each side of a Contradiction seems to us demonstrable. Several instances might be given of this. I shall instance only in the divisibility of Matter. Nothing seems more evident than that divisibility is essential to Matter, and that therefore all Matter is divisible, so that the least part of Matter is as divisible as the biggest, because the least particle of Matter is Matter, that is, it is of the same Nature and Essence with the whole : and all Matter differs only in Bulk, or Figure, or Place, or Rest, or Motion. It being then of the Nature of Matter to be divisible, it must ever be divisible, tho it be never so often divided ; since it can never be so divided, as to lose it own Nature, or cease to be Matter. On the other side, it is demonstrable that Matter cannot be infinitely divisible ; because whatever is divisible is divisible into parts, and no parts can be infinite, because no Number can be so. For all Number is necessarily in it self capable of being counted or numbred, tho no Finite Being may be able to number it, a Numberless Number is a contradiction, it is a Number, which is no Number : therefore all Number must be even or odd,

odd, and must be capable of Addition and Substraction, which is contrary to the Nature of Infinite. For what is less or greater has certain bounds or limits, and therefore cannot be infinite, or without any end or bounds. Matter therefore cannot be divisible *in Infinitum*, since all Division is into Parts, and all Parts are capable of being numbred, that is, they are more or fewer, even or odd. And it will not suffice to say, that Matter can never actually be divided into infinite Parts, tho it be capable of infinite Division, so as that there can be no end of its divisibility. For the Parts into which it is divisible must be actually existent, tho not actually divided: for nothing can be divisible into parts which it hath not, and all parts actually existent, whither they be divided, or only divisible, are capable of being numbred, or must have a determinate number, and therefore cannot be infinite. But to say that these Parts of Matter are indefinite, but not infinite, is only to confess, that we know not what to say of them: for they are indefinite in respect to us, not in their own Nature, we cannot determine their Number, or what end there can be of dividing them, but this is an argument of our own ignorance, and proves nothing as to the nature of the thing.

Again, nothing is clearer to every understanding, than that all the parts into which

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the whole is divided, being taken together are equal to the whole : yet it seems many ways demonstrable, that any single part is equal to the whole. I shall give but one such Proof of this, as may be most obvious. It must be granted, that in any Circle a line may be drawn from every point of the Circumference to the Center. Suppose then the Circle to be the *Æquator*, or a line drawn round the Globe of the Earth, and that ten thousand lesser Circles are drawn within the *Æquator* round the same Center, and that a right Line is drawn from every point of the *Æquator* to the Center of the Globe ; every such Right Line drawn from the *Æquator* to the Center must be of necessity cut thro the ten thousand lesser Circles drawn about the same Center, and consequently there must be the same Number of Points in a Circle ten thousand times less than the *Æquator*, that there is in the *Æquator* it self. And because there may be a Circle drawn from any point of the Diameter, the lesser Circles may be multiplied to as many as there are points in the Diameter, which are innumerable, and therefore the least Circle imaginable may by this demonstration have as many points as the greatest, that is, it may be as big as the greatest, or as big as one never so many thousand times bigger than it self. For all the Lines drawn from the utmost Circumference terminate in the Center, which proves that the Center,

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or the least Circle imaginable immediately next to it, must be equal to the Circumference never so much bigger than it. For to answer, that the lesser Circles have as many points, but not so big as the greatest, is against the supposition, because I suppose a line drawn from every one of the least points of the greatest Circle, thro the least Circle to the Center, and the least points in the greatest Circle must be as small as any in the least Circle, there being nothing in the nature of Circles or Points to hinder it, and the every Line passing from the Circumference to the Center, is supposed to be of the same bigness in all its parts, and therefore all the Points of Intersection must be equal with those in the Circumference.

This proves, that we may lose our selves in the speculation of material things: for when we once abstract them from sense, and consider them in the Theory, they become inexplicable: Because our Faculties were never designed for such speculations, and are not made for them, nor are capable of them, at least in this mortal state. But this is no Argument that our senses rightly disposed, and in due circumstances, may deceive us in things, which are the Objects of sense, or that we may be deceived in trusting to them. Because what is the object of sense, is the proper object for us to judge of by notions derived from our senses, or by the Informations which we receive from them. Our Faculties

were designed not for meer speculation and curiosity about matters, which perhaps it is impossible for us Creatures fully to comprehend, but for our use and welfare: they were designed to prevent our being deceived in things which are the objects of sense, and therefore all the absurdities, which are charged upon the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, are truly urged, because they are concerning an object of sense; and all such Maxims, as *the part is less than the whole*, &c. must hold true, when they are applied to objects of sense, tho it be past our understandings to conceive, how they should be applicable to things, which do not fall under the perception of our senses; for these notions were implanted in us, to guide and direct us in the course of this life; and we must rely upon them, when they are applied only to their proper objects, rather than upon any speculations, which are too nice and high for our conceptions. And it is as absurd to believe what contradicts our senses in an object of sense, as to extend these Maxims to objects which are insensible and only in Idea.

The seeming demonstration of these, and such like contradictions, arises from the applying of the Maxims taken from Physical and Material things, to Mathematical Idea's, which are in the mind only, and have no existence in the Nature of things. And the same absurdities may be started upon any other

ther subject, by confounding the several Notions and Properties of things of different Natures. That the whole is greater than part of it is a Physical Axiom and obvious to sense, but that Lines are formed by indivisible Points, is purely Mathematical Speculation, and the work of Reason. So again, that Matter is divisible is an object of sense, but that divisibility is inseparable from Matter is mere speculation, and a deduction which is made from sense, of which our senses can give us no assurance, but that our Reason may be mistaken in it. And whenever we pass the proper bounds of each Faculty, and judge the of difficulties concerning the objects belonging to one Faculty, by abstracted Notions belonging to another, we must necessarily fall into error and confusion. And therefore this must needs happen, when we reason about objects, which we know only by Revelation, and which are the Natural and Proper objects of none of our Faculties.

There are proper Notions and Maxims, which belong to the several Natures and Kinds of things, and these must of necessity fail us, when they are used about things of another Nature. Thus if a man should judge of Sounds by his Ideas of Colours, or of Colours by his Notions of Sounds, he might multiply contradictions without end: and yet these are not more different than sensible objects are from insensible, and material from immaterial.



terial. God may see it fitting to reveal such things to us, as are above our understandings, but then we must be contented to take his word for the Truth of them, and not apply our Principles and Maxims taken from things of an inferiour Nature, to things of which we can have no conception but from revelation : which would be as absurd as for a deaf man to apply the Notion which he has of Colours to Sounds, or for a blind man to fancy, that there is no such thing as Colours, because he is told they cannot be heard.

And there must be a due proportion between the Faculty and its object. For the Faculties both of our Bodies and Minds are confined and limited in their exercise about their several objects. The parts of Matter may be too small and fine to be any longer discerned or perceived by sense. For only Bodies, which are so big as to reflect a due quantity of Rays to the eye, can be perceived by the sight it self, the quickest and subtilest of all our senses. And as objects in their bulk are sensible, but are insensible in their minute parts ; so it is in the inward sensations or preceptions of the mind in respect of its objects. We may puzzle and perplex our selves in the deductions, which may be made from the most common Notions. Nothing is more certain and familiar to our Minds than our own thoughts that we think, and understand, and will, we all know, but what is  
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the principle and subject of thought in us, and how our understanding and will act upon, and determine each other, is matter of perpetual dispute.

The summ of this argument is, that our Faculties are finite, and of no very large extent in their operations, but are confined to certain objects, and limited to certain bounds and periods. Both our Natural and Acquired knowledge is conversant about certain kinds of objects, and our Faculties are fitted and suited to them, and from the properties and affections which we observe in them, we form Notions, and make Conclusions, and raise Maxims and Axioms. Now if we apply our Natural Notions to things which we know only by Revelation, we must be very liable to great mistakes about them. For thus it is in things not so much out of the reach of our capacities, and which are not of a spiritual Nature; if we frame speculative and abstract Ideas from the Principles and Maxims which are formed in our Minds from sensible objects, we may soon puzzle our selves, and seem to demonstrate contradictions; which demonstrates only, that all arguments of this Nature are vain and unconcluding. And therefore it must be absurd to reject the Mysteries of Religion, because they will not come under the Rules of Logick and Philosophy, when they are acknowledged to be incomprehensible, and therefore not to be judged of  
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as to the Manner and Nature of them by the Rules and Principles of Humane Sciences.

What has been here alledged concerning the Contradiction about the divisibility of Matter is no more than has been generally confest by the best Philosophers and Mathematicians. And the excellent Mr Boyle having produced the Testimony of Galileo and Des Cartes upon this subject, concludes with

(a) Considerat. about the Reasonableness of Reason and Religion; Sect 2. this observation. (a) If then such bold and piercing Wits and such excellent Mathematicians are forced to confess, that not only their own Reason, but that of Mankind may be passed and non-pluss'd about Quantity, which is an object of contemplation, Natural, nay Mathematical, and which is the subject of the rigid demonstrations of pure Mathematicks, why should we think it unfit to be believed, and to be acknowledged, that in the attributes of God, who is essentially an infinite being, and an ens singularissimum; and in divers other divine things, of which we can have no knowledge without Revelation, there should be some things, that our finite understandings cannot, especially in this life, clearly comprehend?

(b) Sunt enim plurima vera quidem, sed parum credibilia, sicut falsa quæque frequenter verisimilia. Quintil. Institut. 1. 4. c. 2. II. Every man believes and has the experience of several things, which in the Theory and Speculative Notion of them would seem as incredible, as any thing in the Scriptures can be supposed to be. It was well observed by (b) Quintilian, and may be observed by any one that will consider it, that very many things

things are true, which scarce seem credible, and as many are false, which have all the appearance of Truth; and yet the cause of unbelief in matters of Religion is chiefly this, that we are hardly brought to believe any thing possible to be done, which we never saw done, and judge of things not from any principle of Reason, but from our own experience, and make this the measure of what is possible to be, not considering that many things may be altogether as possible, which we never knew done, and that we should think many things impossible, of which we have the daily experience if we had never seen nor known them to be. For what we have the daily experience of, we are apt to think very easy, and scarce suspect that there can be any difficulty in it, but frame to our selves some kind of account of it, and please ourselves perhaps with a conceit that we perfectly understand it, and conclude, that such and such things must needs come to pass, from the causes which we assign. For when a thing is common and familiar to us, we either take no pains at all to consider the nature of it, or when we do observe and consider it, being ashamed to confess our own ignorance, we persuade ourselves, that there is no such great difficulty in it, but 'fancy we understand the true Reason and Cause of it. And if it were not for the carelessness of some in not minding the wonderful effects of  
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Nature, and the Pride of others in fancying that they are ignorant of nothing, which is the constant object of their senses, I am per- that there are several things in the World, which we daily see and experience, that would seem as wonderful almost as the Resurrection itself, or any Mystery in Religion. The greatest Philosophers have been able to give but a very imperfect account of the most ordinary and obvious things in Nature, and if we had only a relation of them without any tryal or experience, we should be inclin'd to conclude them impossible. The King of *Siam*, it is said, would not believe the *Dutch* Ambassador, but thought himself affronted, when he was told by him, that in *Holland*, Water would become so hard in cold weather, that Men or Elephants might walk upon it, and the relations of things in those Countries, would have seem'd as strange to us, if the constant report of men, who have been there, had not made them familiar to us. It was formerly disbelieved, nay absolutely deny'd, as absurd and impossible, that there could be any such place, as that which is now known by the name of *America*, or that the Torrid and Frigid Zones could be habitable : No mystery in Religion can seem more incredible to any man, than these things did appear even to Wise and Learned men, and if they had not been found to be by Navigation, they might have seem'd incredible still, for ought we can tell,

tell, tho now we wonder at the ignorance of former times, that they should make any doubt of them, and admire how they came to lye so long unknown, for these things seem obvious, when they are once discovered, and it would be a disparagement to us, if we could not make as great discoveries at home as those do, who travel to the *Indies*. And if we will but consider a little with our selves, we shall find that we may be at least as much mistaken in our Philosophy about the things of another World, as our Ancestors were for so many ages concerning so much of this, and shall conceive it very possible, that there may be a Heaven and a Hell, tho we never spoke with any body, that had been in either of those places, and that there may be a Trinity and a Resurrection, tho we were able to give no account of them. For Nature it self exceeds our comprehension, and therefore the Divine Essence, and the Almighty Power of God must needs much more exceed it.

The motion of the Heavens, and of the Winds and Seas, the light of the Sun and Moon and Stars, the conception and birth of all Creatures, nay the growth of Corn, and of the very Grass of the Field, and all the most obvious and inconsiderable productions of Nature, have so many wonderful difficulties in the explication of them, that if we were not mightily inclined to flatter our selves, I am afraid we should sooner turn Scepticks, than  
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be able to imagin, that we can give any tolerable account of them. For when all is done, we know just enough of them to acknowledge and admire the infinite Power and Wisdom and Goodness of God, and to be led to a stedfast belief and assurance of what he has revealed of himself, and of the World to come ; that *the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World may be clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead,* ROM. 1.

20. How little is it, that we know of this Earth, where we live, and which we dote so much upon ? For by the least calculation it is above three thousand and five hundred miles to the Center ; but the Art and Curiosity of Man has never reached, according to Mr. Boyle's account, after all his enquiries among Navigators and Miners, *(c) above one mile or two at most downward (and that not in above three or four places) either into the Earth, or into the Sea : yet all Astronomers agree, as he afterwards observes, that the Earth is but a Physical point in comparison of the Starry Heaven. Of how little extent then, says he, must our knowledge be, which leaves us ignorant of so many things touching the vast bodies, that are above us, and penetrates so little a way even into the Earth, that is beneath us, that it seems confined to but a small share of the superficial part of a Physical Point.* And to shame the pride and vanity of Mankind, the chiefest discoveries in Philosophy,

(a) Excellency of Theology, Sect.

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phy, as he likewise observes, have been the productions of Time and Chance, not of any Wisdom or Sagacity. Which is a remarkable acknowledgment in a person, who has oblig'd the world with so many wonderful Improvements in experimental Philosophy.

The Circulation of the Blood has been but lately found out, and was looked upon as absurd at its first discovery; tho now what man can doubt of it? And some of the most common effects of Nature might seem as strange as any, if the frequency of them did not prevent our wonder. If (as *Maimonides* puts a case) we suppose a man of never so good natural parts, so brought up as to be ignorant of the manner how the several Species of Animals are preserved and propagated in the world, how many scruples might he raise to himself concerning their Conception and Formation? Might he not object, that it is impossible, that the Infant should ever live, and be nourished, and grow in the Womb? and would he not offer abundance of Demonstrations to prove, that the Natural Birth of Mankind, and of all other Creatures, is utterly impossible? Our Saviour in his discourse with *Nicodemus*, answers his Doubts concerning the New Birth, by putting him in mind that he was as little able to give an account of the Wind, and that he could not tell *whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*; implying that there is much less reason to

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doubt of things of a Spiritual nature, because we are able to give no sufficient explication of them, when we are thus at a loss about the most common and obvious things in the world, *Joh. 3. 8.* And *S. Paul* confutes all objections against the Resurrection by a like Argument, alledging, that as it would be intolerably absurd to deny or doubt of the growth of Corn, because it cannot perfectly be explained: so it is much more absurd to deny or doubt of the Resurrection for no better reason, since supernatural things must be more obscure and harder to be understood by us than natural; *1 Cor. 15. 36.*

Indeed Infidelity could never be more inexcusable than in the present Age, when so many discoveries have been made in Natural Philosophy, which would have been thought as incredible to former Ages, as any thing perhaps that can be imagined, which is not a downright contradiction. That Gravitating or Attractive Force, by which all Bodies act one upon another, at never so great a distance, even through a *Vacuum* of prodigious extent, lately demonstrated by *Mr Newton*; the Earth, together with the Planets, and the Sun and Stars being placed at such distances, and dispos'd of in such order, and in such a manner, as to maintain a perpetual ballance, and poise throughout the Universe, is such a discovery, as nothing less than a Demonstration could have gained it any Belief. And this System  
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of Nature being so lately discovered, and so wonderful, that no account can be given of it by any Hypothesis in Philosophy, but it must be resolved into the sole Power and good Pleasure of Almighty God, may be a caution against all Attempts of estimating the Divine Works and Dispensations by the Measures of Humane Reason. The vastness of the World's extent is found to be so prodigious, that it would exceed the Belief not only of the Vulgar, but of the greatest Philosophers, if undoubted experiments did not assure us of the Truth of it. We are assured by men of the best art and skill in those things, \* that every Fixt Star of the first magnitude is above an hundred times bigger than the whole Globe of the Earth, and yet they appear less through the Telescopes, than they do to the naked Eye, and look no bigger than meer Specks or Physical Points of Light; and the Sun, which is some millions of miles nearer to us than the Fixt Stars, is by Mathematicians generally believed to be above an hundred and threescore times bigger than the Earth, and by the exactest calculations, is estimated to be eight or ten thousand times as big as the whole Earth, and (as Mr Boyle thinks) may perhaps be found to be yet much vaster by further observations. The Earth is \* computed to be above seventeen millions of German miles distant from the Sun: And a Bullet carried with the same swiftness that it has when it is shot out

\* See Mr Boyle, of the high veneration Mankind owe to God.

\* Huygen's Conject. concerning the Planetary Worlds, lib.

of a great Gun, supposing it moved from the Earth to the Sun, would spend twenty five years in its passage ; to move from Jupiter to the Sun it would require one hundred and twenty five years ; and from Saturn thither two hundred and fifty years : and such a Bullet, by Mr *Huygens's* computation, would spend almost seven hundred thousand years in its passage between us and the nearest of the Fixt Stars ; he speaks concerning the nearness of em, and then stands amaz'd to think, *what a prodigious number besides there must be of those, which are placed so deep in the vast spaces of Heaven, as to be as remote from these, as these are from the Sun.* For, if with our bare eye we can observe above a thousand, and with a Telescope can discover ten or twenty times as many, *what bounds of number, says he, must we set to those, which are out of the reach even of these Assistances ! especially if we consider the infinite Power of God.* Really when I have been reflecting thus with myself, methought all our Arithmetick was nothing, and we are versed but in the very Rudiments of Numbers in comparison of this great summ. For this requires an immense Treasury not of twenty or thirty Figures only in our Decuple Progression, but of as many as there are grains of Sand upon the shore. And yet who can say, that even this number exceeds that of the Fixt Stars ?

The Quantity of Motion in the world is no less wonderful. For if the Earth move  
upon

upon its own \* Axis, a place situate under the *Æquator* must be carried with as swift a motion, as a Bullet shot out of a Cannon; and if the Earth stand still, and the Stars move round about it, a Fixt Star in the *Æquator* must move fifty two thousand five hundred fifty five miles in a minute of an hour; which, if not more, is at least three thousand times faster than the motion of a Cannon Bullet: and the motion of the Fluid Matter intersperst between the Earth and the Stars must be answerably rapid. And yet all these prodigious motions are so exactly proportioned and moderated, that, as that Great Philosopher observes, no Watch for a few hours has ever gone so regularly, as the whole World has been moved for so many Ages. And in the consideration of innumerable Instances of the stupendous Works of Nature, the ingenuous, says he, confess their Ignorance, and the confident betray theirs.

But if any man shall think these Calculations extravagant, (as discoveries in Philosophy are commonly thought by such as are little conversant in it) let him remember, that they are set down according to the best observations, that the wit of man, after the experience of so many Ages, has been able to make. So that whether these accounts be true or false, they shew the insufficiency of humane Understanding to examine the works of God, and do by consequence shew how



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much more [uncapable the wisest of men are to comprehend the Infinite essence of the Creator himself.

\* Conject.  
concerning  
the Discre-  
pancy of the  
Worlds,  
Lib. 1.

The famous Mr \* *Huygens* lately mentioned, speaking of the passage and communication of Light every way, and in every point of Space through such vast Regions (which must be much more to be admired, if there be suppos'd to be a *Vacuum*, in which there can be nothing to direct or determine its Motion and regulate its Course) has these words; *all these things are so wisely, so wonderfully contrived, that it is above the power of humane Wit, not to invent or frame somewhat like them, but even to imagine or comprehend them.*

To say nothing of the strange Discoveries concerning the Formation and Contexture of the Bodies both of Plants and Animals; the innumerable little Animals, which are discovered by Microscopes in but one drop of water, and many other observations of the like nature, are so wonderful, that we might well suspect the truth of the experiments, if men of the greatest skill and integrity, as well in our own, as in other Countreys, did not agree in them. The vast quantities of water, which are continually flowing out of so many thousand Rivers into the Sea keep their constant course, and are some way so disposed of, as that the Sea and Land retain always a due proportion to each other. But the Original of the Fountains from whence those

those Rivers proceed, and how this Circulation of Waters is made, is still matter of dispute. The concussions of Earthquakes reaching sometimes to so vast an extent, and the prodigious eruptions of Fire from divers burning Mountains in several parts of the Earth, throwing out abundance of matter in Rivers of Fire of great breadth for many miles together, seem incredible to those, who have not read and considered these things. The Verticity of the Loadstone, the Flux and Reflux of the Sea, Life and Motion, every thing in Natural Philosophy, when seriously examined, has so many inexplicable Difficulties, as would make a considerate man very modest in his Censures concerning things supernatural. For if we had been placed in another World, a Natural History of this might have seemed as strange to us, as any thing Revealed can do now. And it must be great presumption in us, who know so little of the World we live in, to talk pragmatically of another, which we have only been told of, and to believe no more than our Sences can inform us of, when every Sense may inform us, how narrow and imperfect our Knowledge is, and that we take upon Trust, or swallow in the Gross, what we are commonly least distrustful about. And not only Nature, but even Art exceeds the Apprehensions of most men. The *Mechanical Powers* and *Motions* are wont to be mistaken for *Magick*

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by such as have not skill and experience in those matters; the performances of *Archimedes* were so wonderful beyond all expectation or belief, that the King of *Syracuse* is said to have made a Decree, to forbid any man to question whatever *Archimedes* should assert. The Force of Gun-powder might be thought incredible, if it were not so common amongst us. Not to mention, that the *Indians* took Watches for Animals, and could not imagine, how men could hold correspondence at a distance by a little piece of Paper. What man is there among the Vulgar that can conceive, how the dimensions and distances of the Sun and Stars can be taken, and how the Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, and of the Satellites of *Jupiter* can be calculated? And is not the knowledge of the wisest man upon earth infinitely more surpass'd by the Divine Wisdom, than his Knowledge can excel that of the greatest Idiot?

II. Those who disbelieve and reject the Mysteries of Religion, must believe things much more incredible. I. He that will not believe the Being of an Eternal God, must believe Matter to be eternal: for it is certain something must be eternal, because nothing could produce nothing; and unless there always had been something, there never could have been any thing. But this Eternal Matter must either have been once without Motion,

on, or always with it: if it were once without Motion, then Matter must move itself; that is, Motion must be produced without any thing to produce it. If it were always in Motion, then there must have been an eternal Succession, since Motion cannot be all at once; for the very nature of Motion supposes Progression, and no Body can move in this space and the next at the same instant: for then it must be in two places at once. But all Succession of Duration is gradual, and the Degrees of it are capable of being numbred; and to suppose an Eternal Succession is to suppose an Infinite Number; that is, a Number, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be subtracted; or a Number which is no Number. Motion therefore could not be Eternal, and consequently the World could not exist from Eternity.

But since there must be something Eternal, there must be something, the duration whereof is indivisible, or which has all its existence together, so as to have existed now no longer, than it had done before the Beginning of the World. For this is the notion of Eternity, that it has neither Beginning nor End: and therefore things eternal never had a less or shorter duration, than they now have, and can never have a longer after millions of Ages, than they had the first year, or day, from whence

whence we may be supposed to begin the computation of those Ages. For a longer or shorter Duration must suppose a Beginning; from whence the computation is made; and therefore that which is eternal, and had no Beginning, can have neither a longer nor a shorter Duration, but always the same: and by consequence Time can bear no proportion to Eternity, because that which had a Beginning can bear no proportion to that which had none. Yet Eternity must consist with Time, in all the differences and successions of it, and must be present with every part of it; that is, the Eternal Being exists in the space, suppose, of a thousand years, and a Temporal, or Created Being exists at the same time as long, and the Temporal Being becomes a thousand years older than it was, but the Eternal no older than it was before; because tho' it co-exist with Time, yet it has no respect to the division of it into Past, Present and Future. There is no Mystery in Religion more difficult and perplexing than this; and yet this is no more than what every one, tho' he be a Deist, or an Atheist, must acknowledge to believe, if he will but consider it.

2. Whoever believes that there is a God, and yet believes no Revelation, or that the Scriptures are not by Revelation from him, must believe a God, and yet deny the Divine Attributes; he must believe that there is a God,

God \*, who is not essentially just, and good \* <sup>Εδω</sup>  
and holy, which is in effect to believe no God <sup>γὰρ ἔδω</sup>  
at all, as I have proved at large in the for- <sup>θὲν ὅτα</sup>  
mer Book. <sup>ἡ ἀγαθὴ</sup>

<sup>ἱπαμύνα</sup>  
<sup>τοῖς δ' ὁμοῦ λείπει, ἡ ἀσφακτοῦ μὴ ἀπορῆται τῇ διαβολῇ τῶν ὁθόνων. &c.</sup>  
<sup>Τὶ δ' ἄρα λοιπὸν ἔδει δρᾶν τὴν τῶν ὁθόνων δ' ἀμύνην; περὶ ἧς</sup>  
<sup>ἡρετῶν ὅτι ὅτι ἡ γῆ τοῖς ἀκαθάρτοις δαίμοσι, &c. ὅτα πῶς ἢ</sup>  
<sup>ἀγαθὸς, ὁ μετὰ ἀμύνην ἡ λαὸς τῶν ὁθόνων, ἔδειξεν ἡμᾶς ἡξίως</sup>  
<sup>ἀδυν.</sup> Cyrill. Alex. contr. Julian. lib. 8.

Much more might be said upon so copious  
a subject, but this is enough to make us more  
humble and modest, in judging of the Di-  
vine Mysteries. For shall poor Mortals, who  
know so little, and that little so imperfectly,  
presume to censure the Holy Scriptures, be-  
cause they contain things, which they can-  
not understand? Shall he, that cannot fully  
explain the Nature of the vilest Insect, re-  
ject what God hath delivered concerning  
himself, because he doth not comprehend it?  
The thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and  
our devices are but uncertain. For the cor-  
ruptible Body presseth down the Soul, and  
the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the mind,  
that museth upon many things. And hardly do  
we guess aright at things that are upon earth,  
and with labour do we find the things that are  
before us: but the things that are in heaven, who  
hath searched out? Wild. 13, 14, 15, 16.

\* But \* out of the contemplation of Na-  
ture, and out of the Principles of humane

\* Ld Ba-  
con's Ad-  
vancement  
of Learn-  
ing, B. 3. c.  
" Rea- 2.



*The Reasonableness and Certainty*

" Reason, to discourse, or earnestly to urge a  
 " point touching the mysteries or Faith ; and  
 " again to be curiously speculative into those  
 " secrets, to ventilate them, and to be inqui-  
 " sitive into the manner of the mystery, is in  
 " my judgment not safe : *Da fidei, quæ fidei*  
 " *sunt.* For the Heathens themselves con-  
 " clude as much, in the excellent and divine  
 " Fable of the Golden Chain, that Men and  
 " Gods were not able to draw *Jupiter* down  
 " to the Earth ; but contrarywise *Jupiter* was  
 " able to draw them up to Heaven. Where-  
 " fore he laboureth in vain, who shall at-  
 " tempt to draw down Heavenly mysteries to  
 " our Reason ; it rather becomes us to raise  
 " and advance our Reason to the adored  
 " Throne of Divine Truth.

## CH A P. II.

*Of Inspiration.*

**A**Ll the Motion of Material things is de-  
 rived from God, and the best account  
 which those who have the most studied the  
 nature of Motion, have been able to give of  
 it is only this, that it is an effect of the Di-  
 vine Power manifesting itself according to  
 certain Laws or Rules, which God has been  
 pleased to prescribe for the communication of  
 Motion from one Body to another. And it  
 is at least as conceivable by us, that God doth  
 act

act upon the Immaterial, as that he acts upon the material part of the World, and highly reasonable to suppose, that he concerns himself with our Souls much more than with our Bodies. There is no doubt to be made, but that separate and unbodied spirits have ways of of conversing, or communicating their thoughts to one another : indeed all the communication and discourse, that is among men in this world, is properly between their Souls, which use their Bodies as instruments for the conveyance of their Thoughts and Notions from one to another and as their Bodies are more or less fit and serviceable to this end, so their discourse is more or less easily convey'd, and therefore Souls when they are at Liberty from these Bodies must have a Power to communicate their own thoughts in a way much more free and unconfin'd than in this Life ; as they have more knowledge in a separate state, so they must have fitter means to communicate it. And since the happiness of Heaven consists in the Vision of God, that is, in the communications of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, God certainly can as well act upon the minds of Men in this mortal-state, tho we be less capable of receiving or observing the influences of his Spirit. Since finite Spirits can act one upon another, it is reasonable to believe that the Spirit of God, *the God of the Spirits of all flesh* doth move and work upon the Spirits of Men, that he enlightens

lightens their understandings, and inclines their Wills by a secret Power and Influence in the methods of his ordinary Grace. And he can likewise act upon the Wills and the understandings of some men with a clearer and more powerful Light and Force, than he is pleased to do upon others, in such a manner as to render them infallible in receiving and delivering his Pleasure and Commandments to the World. He can so reveal himself to them, by the Operations of his Holy Spirit, as that they shall be infallibly assur'd of what is revealed to them, and as infallibly assure others of it. Which kind of Revelation is styl'd Inspiration, because God doth not only move and actuate the minds of such men; but vouchsafes to 'em the extraordinary Communications of his Spirit; the Spirit then more especially may be liken'd to the Winds, to which it is compared in Scripture: for by strong convictions and forcible, but gracious Impressions he breaths upon their Souls, and infuses his Divine Truths into them. But upon those, to whom God did thus reveal himself by inward light and knowledge, he did moreover bestow a power of giving external evidence by miraculous works, that their pretences were real, and that what they spoke was not of them, but was reveal'd to them from God. This inspiration the Apostles profess to have both in their Preaching and Writings, and this evidence they gave of it.

In

In speaking of the Inspiration, by which the Scriptures were written, I. I shall shew wherein the Inspiration of the Writers of the Scriptures did consist, or how far it extended. II. I shall from thence make such inferences, as may afford a sufficient answer to the objections alledged upon this subject.

I. I shall shew wherein the Inspiration of the Writers of the Scriptures did consist, or how far it extended. And here we must consider both the Matter and the Words of Scripture. The *Matter* is either concerning things reveal'd, and which could not be known but by Revelation, or it is something which was the object of Sense and Matter of Fact, as when the Apostles testify, that our Saviour was crucify'd and rose again; or lastly, it is matter of Reason, as discourses upon Moral subjects, and inferences made from things reveal'd, or from matter of Fact. God, who is a Spirit, can speak as intelligibly to the spirits and minds of Men, as Men can speak to the ear, and in things which could not be known but by Revelation, the notions were suggested and infused into the minds of the Apostles and Prophets by the Holy Ghost, Præterea scito, u- but they might be left to put them into their num- own *\* Words*, being so directed in the use of quemq;

Prophe- *Words*, being so directed in the use of tam pecu- niare quid habere, & ea lingua, eaq; loquendi ratione, quæ ipsi est famili- aris & consueta, ipsum impelli à Prophetia sua ad loquendum ei, qui intel- ligit ipsum. Mainon. More Nevoch. Part 2. c. 29.

them,

them, as to give infallibly the sense and full importance of the Revelation. In matters of Fact, their Memories were according to our Saviours promise assisted and confirm'd. In matters of Discourse or Reasoning, either from their own natural Notions, or from things Reveal'd, or from matters of Fact, their understandings were enlightned, and their Judgments strengthened. And still in all cases their natural Faculties were so supported and guided both in their Notions and Words, as that nothing should come into their Writings, but what is infallibly true. They had always the use of their Faculties, tho' under the infallible Direction and Conduct of the Holy Ghost, and in things that were the proper objects of their faculties, the Holy Ghost might only support and guide them, as in matters of sense and natural Reason and Memory, and in their Words and Style to express all these. But in things of an higher Nature, which were above their faculties, and which they could have no knowledge of, but from Revelation, the things themselves were infused, tho' the words in most cases might be their own, but they were preserv'd from error in the use of them by that Spirit, who was to *guide them into all Truth.*

For tho' the several Writers of the Scriptures might be allowed to use their own Words and Style, yet it was under the infallible guidance and influence of the Spirit, as  
when

when a man is left to the use of his own Hand, or manner of Writing, but is directed in the Sense and Orthography by one who dictates to him, or assists him with his help, where it is needful. *Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man : but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost :* 2 Pet. 1. 21. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God :* 2 Tim. 3. 16. *The Holy Ghost saith, by the Psalmist, to day if ye will hear his Voice,* Hebr. 3. 7. *David saith of himself, the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my Tongue,* 2 Sam. 23. 2. And God is said to speak by the hand of Moses his servant, and by the hand of his servant Abijah the Prophet, 1 Kings 8. 53. 14. 18. By which it appears, that he used the Prophets as his Instruments in revealing his Will: For as Miracles were by the immediate power of God, though wrought by the hands of men, so the Revelations were of God, though spoken or written by the Prophets and Apostles. But though God used them as his Instruments, yet not as mechanical, but as rational Instruments; and as in working their Miracles, they were not always necessarily determined to the place, or to the persons on whom they were wrought, but in general were guided to work them, when they were proper and seasonable; and the Actions, by which they wrought them, were their own, though the power

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that



that accompanied them was of God ; so in their Doctrines , they might be permitted to use their own Words and Phrases, and to be guided by prudential Motives, as to time, and place, and persons, with a directive power only over them, to speak and write nothing but infallible truth, upon such occasions, and in such circumstances, as might answer the end of their Mission, with which they were entrusted.

God promised *Moses*, when he sent him to *Pharaoh*, that he would be with *his mouth*, and with *Aaron's mouth*, and would teach them what they should say, *Exod. 4. 12, 15.* And our Saviour tells his Disciples, *ye shall be brought before Governours and Kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles : But when they deliver you up, take no thought, how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak,* *Matt. 10. 18, 19.* And if *Moses* was inspired upon that particular occasion, and the Apostles were inspired in things which were personal, as in the defence that they made for themselves, they must much rather be inspired in their Writings, which concern the Church in all ages. *St Luke had perfect understanding of all things from above,* *Luke 1. 3.* so *Dr Lightfoot* renders it with great probability : for thus *ἐνδοξασθαι* is used for *ἰσχυρῶς* in many places of Scripture, *Job. 3. 3, 31. 19. 2. Jam. 1. 17. 3. 17.* And this the Church of  
Co.

Corinth expected from St Paul, they sought a proof of Christ speaking ~~in~~ him; 2 Cor. 13. 3. as that Apostle tells them he did, and that not in a weak and obscure, but in a powerful and effectual manner. He writes for the same reason to the *Thessalonians*, *ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus*, 1 Thess. 4. 2. and he distinguisheth between his own Judgment (assisted and enlightened, though not infallibly, by the Holy Ghost) and the Commandments of the Lord, or the infallible dictates of the Spirit, 1 Cor 7. 10, 12, 25, 40. *The Holy Ghost taught the Apostles all things, and brought all things to their remembrance*, Jo. 14. 26. and *guided them into all Truth*, Joh. 16. 13. and the *Unction from the holy one* instructed 'em to know all things, 1 Jolt. 11. 20. that is, all things pertaining to Salvation; this is said of their Disciples, and therefore may in a more especial manner be affirmed of the Apostles themselves; inasmuch that the words themselves are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, *which things also we speak not in the words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*, 1 Cor. 2. 13. For they were under the conduct and influence of the Holy Ghost in the choice of every word they used, tho not so, as to be inspired with a new style and dialect; the words themselves were not always suggested, but they were always inspired in the use of them; and tho

they might be permitted to chuse their own words and expressions, yet it was with this limitation, that they were never permitted to make choice of such, as would not fully and infallibly express the mind of the Holy Ghost.

And therefore 1 Cor. 14. 13. the Apostle gives this direction, *Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret*; that is, let him pray, that he may have the Divine Inspiration to assist him in expressing himself in a known tongue; by which he is enabled to speak in an unknown one, and that he may be infallible in rendering that in his own tongue, which he infallibly speaks in another. Which makes it evident, that when they spoke by Inspiration in their own language, they had the Guidance and Inspiration of the Holy Ghost in the use of their words; and this was the reason why those that spoke by Inspiration in a strange tongue, durst not presume to interpret the words, which the Holy Ghost dictated to them in that tongue, so as to give them out for Divine Revelation, unless they were particularly empowered to render them in their own language with the same exactness, with which they were inspired to speak in a strange tongue. For that the necessity of praying that they might interpret, could not proceed from any inability to interpret by reason of the force and heat of the Rapture which was upon

upon 'em, that made 'em unable to utter their conceptions in their own language, or to retain the sense of them in their minds afterwards, seems plain from vers. 27. *if any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret, &c.* For if they had been acted by such rapturous heats and extasies, they could have been as little able to refrain, when the Rapture was upon them, and to remember what they had to deliver, when their course came to speak, as they are supposed to have been to remember what they were inspired to speak in one language, when they went to express it in another. Neither were they ignorant themselves of what they spoke, but when it is said *vers. 14. for if I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful*; the meaning of that is, that it was of no benefit to others, tho' he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifyeth himself, *vers. 4.* Some men were inspired to speak in strange tongues with as much readiness, and more exactness than they could do in their native language; but this was insignificant to such as understood not the tongue in which they spoke. *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also, vers. 15. i. e.* I will pray by the Guidance and Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but in my own language, in which my understanding is employed, and the words are

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not all directly suggested to me by the Spirit (as they must be in a language which I speak merely by Inspiration) but I am only so far guided and assisted in the choice and use of my words, as to speak infallibly the mind of the Spirit. *Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, &c, verse 16.* Those who had the gift of tongues were, it seems, so puffed up with it, that they would worship God in no other but in those languages, tho none of the Assembly understood them, and would be always unnecessarily and unseasonably repeating the Revelations, which they had received in strange languages; the Apostle tells such men that it was very improper and absurd to deliver their Revelations in an unknown Tongue, or to pray or give thanks in a Language not understood by those that heard them, but that they should pray that they might interpret, or forbear the use of the gift of tongues, unless before them who understood the Tongues in which they spoke, that it might be for edification. For in their Inspirations they were confined at certain times to some particular Language, *as the Spirit gave them utterance*; and it might have done great prejudice to the Truth of Religion, if they of themselves had ventured to render that into their own Language, which was revealed to them in a strange Tongue; and for this reason it was not permitted those, who spoke with Tongues, to speak in any but that, in which the Revelation was made to them, unless they

they were enabled to do it by being inspired with a Power of Interpretation. For *to speak with tongues* and *to interpret* were distinct gifts, 1 Cor. 12. 10, 30. and whatever gift any one had received, he was confined to the exercise of it, and might not presume to pretend to another, which he had not received.

The gift of *tongues*, and of the *interpretation of tongues*, being so particularly distinguished, this must imply, that the Apostles (who are supposed to have had all the gifts, which others had but in part) were guided by the Spirit in their words and expressions, since those who spoke by the Spirit, were unable to interpret without a particular gift; for no interpretation was sufficient, but such as rendered the sense with infallible truth and exactness; and if this exactness of words was requisite in their Assemblies, it must be much rather necessary in the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists. Among other gifts of the Holy Ghost, are reckon'd *the word of wisdom*, and *the word of knowledge*, 1 Cor. 12. 8. the former *Grotius* understands of speaking wise sayings, and the latter of knowledge in History; and to the rest was added the gift of *discerning of spirits*, v. 10. And as there were several gifts, so there were several offices in the Church, *Ephes.* 4. 11, 12. Now the several gifts of the Holy Ghost were not all bestowed ordinarily upon the same person, but such as were necessary for that office and em-



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ployment which he was to execute. But as the Apostolical Power comprehended in it the powers of every other office, so it was requisite that they should possess the gifts proper for the performance of whatever was to be done by them. And when God, by his providence and disposal of things, gave the Apostles and Evangelists occasions of writing upon such and such subjects, and to such and such persons, or Churches, he by his Spirit inwardly excited and assisted them in it, bestowing upon them the gifts of *Wisdom* and *Knowledge*, and of writing and speaking either in their own or any other Language, in which they were required to write or speak: For we are not to suppose that any gifts were bestowed upon others, and yet denied to them, to whom they were most useful and necessary, in order to the delivering of that Faith and Doctrine, which was to be the standing rule for the attainment of Salvation to all Christians unto the end of the world. When others had the gift of speaking and interpreting strange Languages, it cannot be conceived that the writers of the Holy Scriptures should be refused that necessary assistance in the Languages in which they wrote, that might preserve them from error; and if any, without the gifts proper for it, had undertaken any office or ministration, the gift of *discerning of Spirits* was a security to the Church from any hurt that might ensue by the pretences of such undertakers.

We

We may be certain, that all the Gifts, which were bestowed for the edification of the Church, were (as far as they were needful) vouchsafed more especially to all such, as were to leave behind them for the benefit of the Church in all Ages, an account of the Gospel of Christ, and the terms of the Salvation to be obtained thereby; and that no such Guidance and Direction of the Holy Ghost was wanting as might preserve them from error in any particular: for there is no particular, but it will fall under some one of those gifts, which were bestowed upon the first Disciples. They were not necessarily to write in an exact and elegant style, but in such as was secured from error in whatever they delivered. To what purpose else had been so many several Gifts? To keep them from gross errors and fundamental mistakes there could have been no need of such a variety of Gifts: but when every sort of error, which men are prone to, had a Remedy provided to prevent it, we may be assured that no error was suffered in those Writings, which were the most important work of the Apostolical Function, and designed for the edifying of the Body of Christ not in one Age and Nation only, but throughout all Ages, and in all parts of the World.

II. I shall now proceed to make such Inferences, as may afford a sufficient Answer to the objections alledged upon this subject.

1. The

## The Reasonableness and Certainty

1. The Inspiration of the Writers of the Scriptures did not exclude humane means, such as information in matters of fact, either by their own senses, or by the testimony of others; or reasoning from their own notions and observations: but the Holy Ghost guided them infallibly in the use of all such means.

2. The Inspiration of the Prophets and Apostles or Evangelists did not exclude the use of their own words and style: and as they might be permitted the use of these, so they might be permitted, or in some cases directed to use the words of others. Many things delivered in one Book of the Scriptures are likewise delivered in another, and some things are repeated in the same words, that God revealing the same things, and in the same express words, at different times, and by different persons, might make the Revelation of them the more evident and remarkable. For that, in which several inspired persons concur, is the more taken notice of, and becomes the more observed, as a thing of great weight and moment. The reason why *the Dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, was because the thing was established by God, and God would shortly bring it to pass*, Gen 41. 32. It is in this as it is in all other things, it is expedient, that in matters of great concernment, there should be the more solemnity, and that they should be the oftner repeated and the more insisted upon;

upon; and if they be exprest in the same words, this implies, that those words carry more than ordinary weight in them: And therefore not only all the Divine Writers agree in the same purpose and design, and testify the same things, as to the chief points of Religion; but some Prophets have foretold the same things, even in the same words with others, as *Isai. 2. 2, 3, 4. Mic. 4. 1, 2, 3.* and several Laws and Matters of Fact are repeated in words, which are very near the same.

3. Tho some things are set down in the Scriptures indefinitely, and without any positive assertion or determination, this is no proof against their being written by Divine Inspiration. For this doth not prove, that the Penmen of those passages were uncertain and doubtful in the particulars so exprest, because the things were of that nature, that it was needless to speak precisely of them: As when *St John* says, *Jo. 21. 8. They were not far from Land; but as it were two hundred Cubits,* it cannot from hence be concluded that the Evangelist was ignorant how far they were from Land: For it was not material to his design to be more particular in a circumstance of that nature; but it was sufficient to say, that they were about two hundred Cubits off at Sea; and it is usual with all Writers to omit fractions, and insert only whole numbers, when it is not material to their purpose to insist upon every

every minute circumstance. It is ordinary with the best Writers to express things uncertainly, which they were notwithstanding thoroughly acquainted withal; and to seem ignorant of things, which they perfectly understood, but past over as not worth the taking notice of, or not considerable enough for them to own the knowledge of them. It is a known Elegancy to say, *nescio quid*, or *nescio quem*, when the Author so speaking was not ignorant of the thing or person there meant, but either signified his contempt of the person or thing, or intimated that it was not worth his while to trouble himself, or his Hearers or Readers with a more particular relation. The \* *Romans*, out of that Awe and Reverence which they had for Oaths, never spoke positively in giving evidence of things which they were certain of, and had seen themselves. And uncertain forms of Speech are observed † by *Ulpian* to have been usual thy Ancient *Greek* Authors in their speaking of things, whereof they were very well assured. It could be of no use or moment in re-

\* Credo hæc eadem Indutiorum in testimonio timuisse aut cogitasse : qui primum illud verbum consideratissimum

nostræ consuetudinis *Arbitror*, quo nos etiam tunc utimur, cum ea dicimus jurari, quæ comperta habemus, quæ ipsi vidimus, ex toto testimonio suo sustulit, atq; omnia se scire dixit. Cic. pro M. Fonteio.

† Τὸ δὲ Νομίζω, ὃ ἤδη ἐν τοῖς Συκκεστιμοῖς ὤνεται, καὶ τὸ Δοκεῖν, καὶ τὰ τοιούτα, ἐπὶ πάντας ὅτι ἀμφισβᾶν τέτυκιν εἰ παλαιοί, ἀλλὰ πολλοὶ καὶ ὅτι τῷ ἀληθεύειν. Ulp. in Demost. Olynth. i.

lation

lation to the miraculous draught of Fishes, to know whether the Ship were two hundred cubits, or half a cubit, or a quarter of a cubit over or under from the Land, and it is usual with St John to express himself in this manner; Jo. 2. 6. 6. 10. 19. 14.

Either then (to keep to the same instance) St John might know the precise distance, and for the reasons mentioned, not declare it, or, it not being of any use or consequence for us to be more particularly informed in a matter of that nature, the Holy Ghost might suffer him to be ignorant of it, if he had no other means of knowing it but by Inspiration: For the Holy Ghost assisted the Apostles and Evangelists to write infallible Truth, but not always to write every little circumstance concerning the things which they related. Many Miracles are wholly omitted, and many circumstances not considerable or material to be mentioned, are omitted, of those Miracles which are recorded. But if nothing be related which may lead us into error, and nothing omitted which is necessary to be known, this is sufficient, and is all that can be expected in a Book, which is to be a Rule of Faith and Manners to us. It is necessary that nothing but Truth should be contained in it, but not that every Truth should be in it: for then the world itself could not contain the Books that should be written. Suppose therefore that St John did not know precisely how many cubits



bits the Ship was from shore ; what doth this prove ? That he did not know the Miracle which he there relates ? Doth it prove that he was not inspired in what he doth relate, if he were not inspired in what he omits ? If he had determined the precise distance, and had not known it, this might have discredited the Authority of his Gospel, but when he has not determined it, can this be an argument in diminution of its Authority, if he did not know what he did not profess to know ? Is it not a good Argument in confirmation of its Authority, that he would assert nothing but what he certainly knew, if in what he was not perfectly assured, he mentions no further than he knew of it ? So *St Paul* acquaints us, when he spoke himself, and *not the Lord*, which is an argument to us, that in all other cases he did not speak of himself, but the Lord spoke by him : it is a confirmation of his Integrity, that he would impose nothing upon us as of Divine Authority, which is not really so, because he that told us in any one case, that he spoke of himself, not as from the Lord, would have made the same Declaration in other cases, whenever he had written any thing without express Revelation.

4. In things, which might fall under human Prudence and Observation, there the Spirit of God seems not to have dictated immediately to the Prophets and Apostles, but only to have used a directive or conducting Power

Power and Influence, so as to supply such Thoughts and Apprehensions to them as might be most proper and seasonable, and to keep them in the use of their own Reason, within the bounds of Infallible Truth, and of Expediency for the present case and occasion. They might be permitted to insert such things as the state of affairs required; which tho not immediately dictated by the Holy Ghost, yet were agreeable to the end and design of his Inspiration, and serviceable to the Ministry, to which they were appointd. There seems to be no necessity to assert, that St Paul sent for his Cloak and Parchments by Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or that he had any immediate command or direction to salute the particular persons named at the end of his Epistles; but only that his Doctrine was immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost: and as he might be permitted to put that into his own words, but so as never to be suffered to express it otherwise than in such a manner, as was fully agreeable to the mind and intention of the Holy Spirit, and therefore infallibly true: So in these lesser and indifferent matters, which some present occasion made requisite to be written of, he had the guidance and assistance of the Holy Ghost to prevent him from writing any thing, but what was expedient in those circumstances, and serviceable to his calling and ministry in the propagation of the Gospel.

But

## The Reasonableness and Certainty

But things of an indifferent nature in themselves might become necessary as to time and place, and persons, and therefore might in some cases be of Divine Inspiration. St Paul's journeying into *Macedonia* rather than into any other Country, was in itself a thing indifferent, but the salvation of many souls might depend upon it, and therefore he was warned by Revelation not to preach the word in *Asia*, nor to go into *Bitthynia*, but into *Macedonia*, Acts 16. 6, 7, 9. In like manner the Salutations of particular persons at the end of his Epistles, tho they may seem to us to be of no great importance, yet might be of mighty consideration and consequence to those who were concerned in them. To be saluted by an Apostle in so particular and solemn a manner, might revive their spirits, and encourage them to perseverance under their Temptations and Afflictions: for his Salutations include his Benediction, which was the exercise of his Apostolick Office and Authority in one great branch of it. And God himself might direct the Apostle to salute such persons for their support and comfort, and encouragement in the Faith. Besides, the Salutation added at the end of the Epistles are a confirmation of the Authority of them: the persons there mentioned were as so many Witnesses, to attest that they were genuine. For, besides the general concernment of the Catholick Church, and of the several Churches more especially,

to which such Epistles were written, the persons who were saluted by name in them, were more particularly concerned to take cognizance of them, and to know all the circumstances relating to them.

And St Paul's advice to *Timothy* to drink no longer Water, but to use a little Wine for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities, 1 Tim. v. 23. was requisite to be given in that Epistle, that it might remain recorded in the Scriptures, in confutation of that superstition, which some were guilty of in abstaining from things lawful, (and particularly from Wine) out of an opinion of Holiness in refraining from them, and of sin in the use of them.

5. That infallible Spirit which assisted and inspired the Apostles and other Sacred Writers, was not permanent and habitual, or continually residing in them, nor given for all purposes and occasions; as we may observe in St Paul, who acquaints us in some things that he had not received of the Lord what he writes. But the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed for the benefit and edification of the Church; and therefore were given in such measures, at such times, and upon such occasions, as might be useful for edification. We find that in a matter of great concernment and importance to the whole Church, the Apostles met together in Council, to decide the controversy; both, because according to our Saviours promise to them, they might expect

expect a more abundant effusion of the Holy Ghost upon them, when they were assembled in his name for that purpose; and because the thing in debate depended upon Matter of Fact, *viz.* that the Holy Ghost was given to the Gentiles, and therefore it was requisite that many should meet together, and testify of that matter. Besides, several that came down from *Judea to Antioch* had refused to submit to the Authority of St Paul and St Barnabas, and it was necessary that these men should be convinced by the unanimous and joint Authority of the Apostles, who being met in a full Council declared, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*, Acts 15. 28. that is, not only to us, but to the Holy Ghost, to the Holy Ghost as well as to us. And this was for an Example and Precedent to the Church in future Ages, to determine Controversies by the Authority of Councils.

6. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost were bestowed upon men, who might have personal failings, and were *men of like Passions* with us, Act. 14. 25. *They had this Treasure in earthen Vessels, that the excellency of the Power might be of God, and not of themselves*, 2 Cor. 4. 7. But they were chosen to be Apostles and Evangelists, and therefore must be so far exempt from error in the execution of their Office and Ministry, as not to deliver false Doctrines in their Writings, which were to be read and received of all Churches in all Ages of the World; for this

this would have defeated and subverted the design of the Institution of the Apostles, and of the Mission of the Holy Ghost, and therefore this God would not suffer, tho they might be suffered to incur such failings as were no prejudice to the Gospel of Christ.

7. There being nothing asserted in the Canon of Scripture but what has some relation to the edification of the Church, tho some parts of it have a less direct and apparent tendency to this end than others; if any one passage or circumstance should have been erroneous, this would diminish the Authority of the Scriptures, and make them in some degree less capable to promote the end for which they were written. And there being so many particular Gifts, the Gift of *Wisdom* and of *Knowledge*; of *Tongues*, and of *Interpretation of Tongues*, and of *discerning of Spirits*: and so many distinct Offices, as *Apostles*, and *Prophets*, and *Evangelists*, and *Pastors*, and *Teachers*, we cannot conceive how those Gifts and these Offices could be better employed than in preserving that Book from error, which was to be the standard of Truth for all Ages; or how, if that Book had not been secured from error by them, these Gifts and Offices had answered the end of their appointment.

Thus much may suffice to prove the Scriptures to be infallible in all the parts and circumstances of them. But it may be observed,



that if the Infallibility of the Sacred Writers had not extended to the words and circumstances, but only to the substantial and fundamental points of Religion, this of itself were enough to vindicate the Divine Authority of the Christian Religion. Nay further, if the Scriptures were written only with the same certainty and integrity that is in *Thucydides*, or in any other credible Historian (which the most obstinate and inveterate Adversary can never deny) yet even then no man without much unreasonableness cou'd reject it.

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### C H A P. III.

#### *Of the Style of the Holy Scriptures.*

**W**Hen God reveals himself to men, he must be supposed to do it in such a manner, as is suitable to the necessities and occasions of those to whom the Revelation is made, and in such Language and Forms of Speech, as that he may be understood by those to whom he reveals himself; he may be suppos'd to speak in the Idiom, and in the Metaphors and Phrases in use amongst them, and to allude to their customs and manner of life, to have regard to the condition and state of their affairs, and to condescend in some measure to their weaknesses, to speak to their capacities, so as to be understood in his Laws, and to encourage and excite men to obey them. For  
tho

tho the particular reason and design of every Law be not always necessary to be known, yet it is necessary that those to whom they are given, should know what the Laws are, and that they should have their Duty prescribed in such a way, as may be effectual to recommend the Practice of it to them.

The style of the Holy Scriptures is a subject which has been largely discoursed of by Mr Boyle and others. What I intend to say upon it I shall reduce to these Heads. I. The Grammatical construction. II. The Metaphors, and Figures, and Rhetorical Schemes of Speech. III. The Decorum, or suitableness of the Matter, or the Things themselves. IV. The Method.

I. The Grammatical construction and propriety of Speaking. It has been by many observed, that there is a great resemblance between the style of the Old Testament, and that of *Homer*, the most ancient Book we have besides; and it is likewise observable, that those things which are by some looked upon as defects in the Scripture style, as the using one Gender, or one Number, or Case or Tense for another, the putting Participles for Verbs, the Comparative or Superlative for the Positive, Actives for Passives, or Passives for Actives, are particularly taken notice of by \* *Plutarch* as excellencies in *Homer*; and he says, they were usual in Prose as well as in Verse amongst the Antients. Whatsoever Solæcisms or Impro-

\* In Vir.  
Homer,

† Vid.  
Dan.  
Heinf.  
Proleg. ad  
exercit.  
Sacr.  
\* Dialog.  
Ciceron.  
† Apud  
Phot. cod.  
cclxxix.

prieties of Speech are to be found in any part of the Scriptures, the like have been observed † in *Homer*, *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, *Pindar* and *Apollonius Rhodius*, by their several Scholiasts, and in *Thucydides* by *Dionysius Halicarnassens*, and in *Tully* by \* *Erasmus* and others. *Xenophon* is observed by † *Helladius*, not to be always exact in point of Grammar; which he ascribes to his Military Life, and his conversation with strangers. Many Solœcisms are found in the ancient Inscriptions, and in *Hyginus*, an Author, as it is generally supposed of *Augustus's* age, which are to be imputed rather to the custom of speech amongst the Vulgar, than to the mistake of these Authors. For in Languages so difficult as the *Greek* and *Latin* are, it was impossible but that the common people must often make great mistakes, which by degrees became customary, and were the character of the \* *Low* and *Plebeian Style*: and in the *Greek* tongue they ascribed their Solœcisms to the particular *Dialect* of the people, among whom they were most in use.

\* Vid.  
Schefferi  
Præfat. &  
Munkeri  
Dissertat.  
in Hygi-  
num.

† Mer.  
Casaub. in  
M. Anto-  
nin. lib.  
i. n. 14.

The Stoicks, who were the most numerous and flourishing Sect of Philosophers in the Primitive times of Christianity, had little regard to the Rules of Grammar: for they were cautioned by their Master *Chrysippus* not to be careful about such niceties: and they are highly commended by a † great Critick for expressing their thoughts, tho commonly with words

words very proper and significant, yet in a style so free from all Affectation or Curiosity, as cometh next to the Simplicity of the Holy Scriptures.

The design of Revelation is not to teach Words but Things, and to express them in such words as may serve for that purpose; and if an improper word or a solœcism may be more serviceable to that end, it is beyond all exactness and propriety of Language. The truth is, it is a sign of a little Genius to be over-curious about words, as *Demosthenes* intimated in his Reply to *Æschines*, telling him that the Fortunes of Greece did not depend upon a Criticism; which *Tully* mentioning, says,

it is \* an easie matter to pitch upon a word spoken in the heat of discourse, and in cool blood to make sport with it. But this is at large treated of by *Longinus*; and *Seneca* speaks excellently to this purpose; † If you observe, says he, that a mans speech is too nice and critical, be sure that he has a mind taken up with little things. A

man of a great mind speaks with the less caution and exactness, whatsoever he says, he is better assured of the matter of his discourse, than to trouble himself much about words. This is the reason that so many great Authors have afforded so much work for the Criticks,

\* Facile est enim verbum aliquod ardens (ut ita dicam) notare, idq; relictis jam animorum incendiis, irridere. Cic. Orator.

† Cujuscunq; orationem videris sollicitam & politam, scito animum quoq; non minus esse pusillis occupatum. Magnus ille remissius loquitur & securius; quæcunq; dicit, plus habent fiduciæ, quam curæ. Senec. Epist. cxv.

to blame, or to excuse them, and very often to commend them for departing from the common forms. The Old Testament has nothing of this nature, but what, for ought that can now be known, was most proper in the *Hebrew* tongue, whatever it may be in others. And as to the New Testament, it is penned in such words, and in such construction of Grammar, as might render it most useful, not according to the *Attick*, or any other dialect, which was known to so few in comparison, that it was confined, as it were, to one Country, or known only to the Learned in others; but in such *Greek*, as was generally understood in the remote and numerous Nations, where that Language was spoken. For which reason so many expressions are taken from the Translation of the *Septuagint*, which was so much in use amongst the Proselytes in all parts of the world. In the Preface to the Book of *Ecclesiasticus* it is observed, that the *same things uttered in Hebrew and translated into another Tongue, have not the same force in them*; and \* *St Jerom* shews, that there was a necessity of making use of such words, as were first taken from the *Heathen Fables*, in translating the Scriptures, which had no affinity to them: but when men speak or write, they must do it so as to be understood, unless they will do it to no purpose; and therefore must take such words as are to be had, and are intelligible to those for whose benefit they write, and they must

† Hieron.  
ad Amos.  
v. 8. & in  
Epist. ad  
Galat. 3.  
1.

must be contented too with such Grammatical construction, as well as with such words, as shall be found expedient to the end for which they write. \* Sometimes again it was necessary to frame new words, to express the Propriety of the *Hebrew* Language, as *Tully* has done in his Books of Philosophy, to explain in *Latin* the terms of it in the *Greek* tongue. And in all respects men must accommodate themselves to their subject, and to the capacities of those for whom they undertake to discourse upon it.

\* Hieron.  
in Galat. 1,  
2.

II. Metaphors, and Rhetorical Schemes or Figures of Speech. Men differ as much in their forms and schemes of speaking, as they do in their manners or customs, or in their complexions and dispositions. Every man has something peculiar in his way of expressing himself, which is so easily distinguished by good Criticks from that of others, that they seldom fail in it, tho there can be no absolute certainty in things of this nature. And † *Photinus* observing that some Orations which pass under the name of *Demosthenes*, were, by reason of the difference of style, ascribed by certain Criticks to other Authors, makes this remark, that he had often taken notice of a great resemblance in the style of Orations made by different Authors, and of as great an unlikeness in the style of those made by the same man. But the different character and manner of style in the several Countries and Nations

† Phot.  
cod. cclxv.



\* Adsciverant ap-  
tum suis  
auribus o-  
pimum  
quoddam  
& tan-  
quam adi-  
patz dicti-  
onis ge-  
nus. Cic.  
Orator.  
† Quintil.  
Instit. lib.  
12. c. 10.  
Cic. Brut.

Nations of the world is much more easily discerned, than it can be in particular men of the same Country. The people of *Caria*, *Phrygia* and *Mysia* were not at all polite and neat \*, says *Tully*, and therefore they loved a gross and slovenly kind of discourse, which the *Rhodians*, not far distant from them, never approved of, and the other *Greeks* liked it much less, but the *Athenians* could not endure it. † There were three kinds of style among the *Greeks*, the *Attick*, the *Asiatick* and the *Rhodian*; and *Tully* besides makes the *Asiatick* twofold. The *Attick* was close and comprehensive; the *Asiatick* was quite contrary to this, and was very lofty, figurative and copious; which some assigned to other causes, but *Quintilian* more truly thinks it proceeded from the different nature and temper of the *Athenians* and *Asiaticks*. The third kind of style was the *Rhodian*, which was of a middle nature betwixt the other two, neither so concise as the *Attic*, nor so redundant as the *Asiatick*, but was a mixture of both; the Genius of that people inclining rather to the *Asiatick*, but *Æschines* in his Banishment at *Rhodes* reformed their style, and fashioned it after the *Attick* manner, as far as the *Rhodian* Genius would admit of it.

It would be endless to make observations upon particular Authors. *Xenophon* and *Plato* have not escaped the Censure of *Longinus*; and *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, besides what hath been

been objected to them in particular, fall under the general censure, which \* *Seneca* passeth upon all Authors of the greatest Fame and Merit ; but he adds, that there is no certain rule for Style, which is continually altered by the use and custom of the place.

\* Nullum sine venia placuit ingenium. Da mihi quem cunque vis magni no- Sciens dis-

minis virum, dicam, quid illi ætas sua ignoverit, quid in illo simulaverit. Sen. Epist. cxiv.

Both the Language and Actions of the Eastern Nations, especially in the earlier ages of the world, had something more vehement and passionate in them, than those of these Western Countreys. The Stiles and Titles of

of their Kings are a remarkable instance of this ; witness that of *Sapores* \*, *Rex Regnum Sapor*, \* *Ammi-*  
*particeps siderum, frater Solis & Lune Constanti-* an. Mar-  
*Cæsari, fratri meo, Salutem plurimam dico.* And cellino.  
lib. 14. c. they retain the like Titles to this day ; † the † Ricant's  
Grand Signior's is in some things the same, in *Hist. lib. 1.*  
others more extravagant ; he is stiled, *God on* c. 2.

*Earth, the Shadow of God, Brother to the Sun and Moon, the Giver of all Earthly Crowns.* The King of \* *Æthiopia* calls himself, *the King at* \* *Letter of*  
*whose Name the Lyons tremble.* David, K.  
of Æthiop.

The Romans themselves, who used greater modesty of style, and more gravity in their actions than many other Nations, practis'd divers things in their Orations and Pleadings, which amongst us would be very strange and absurd. Thus † *C. Gracchus*, a great and popular Orator at Rome, was wont to have one

in Geddes Church Hist. of Æthiop.

† Lic. de Orat. lib. 3. Quintil. institut. lib. 1. c. 10.

stand

stand behind him with a Flute, to give him the true Key, to which he was to raise his voice ; which would go near to make the best Orator amongst us ridiculous. It was customary likewise with the *Romans*, to use all arts to raise the passions, by Actions and Representations as well as by Words : \* Sometimes they would hang up a Picture, representing the Fact about which they were to speak, and the Accusers were wont to produce in open Court a Bloody Sword, or the Garments of the Wounded, and the Bones, if any had been taken out of their Wounds, or to unbind the wounds, or shew the Scars. † *Quarum rerum ingens plerumque vis est, velut in rem presentem animos hominum ducentium*, These and other things more strange to us, were practised by the most famous Orators of their times amongst the *Romans*, by which they spoke to the eyes, as it were, of their Hearers, and therefore these may well be reckoned amongst the Figures and Modes of Rhetorick, whereby they gained upon the affections of the people \*. *Tully* tells us of himself, that he took up a Child sometimes, and held it in his arms to move compassion ; and that † when *M. Callidius* had accused *Q. Gallius* of an attempt to poison him, and had made it out by clear proof, he urged this as a sufficient objection against all that *Callidius* had said, that he had not expressed any passion in his pleading, he had not smote his Forehead, nor his Thigh, nor

\* Cic. pro  
P. Sextio.

† Quintil.  
ib. lib. 6.  
c. 1.

\* Cic. O-  
rator.

† Nulla  
perturba-  
tio animi,  
nulla cor-  
poris ;  
frons non  
perculsa,  
non fe-  
mur pe-  
dis (quod  
mini-  
mum est)  
nulla sup-  
plicatio.  
Cic. Brut.

nior (which was the least thing he could have done, if his accusation had been true) he had not so much as stamp't with his Foot. *Callidius* had all the accomplishments of an Orator, but this of moving the passions by such means; and the want of this was looked upon as a very great defect in him. Upon the death of the two *Scipio's* in *Spain*, when the signal of Battle was given by the new General, \* *Livy* describes the *Roman Army* weeping, and knocking their heads, and throwing themselves upon the Ground. And what could a Speech at any time have availed with such men, that had been delivered in a cold and unaffected manner? † *Cesar* himself † *Suet.* wept, and rent his Garment in a Speech *Jul. Cæs.* which he made to his Souldiers, as soon as *c. 33.* he had past the *Rubicon*. Whoever observes their Orations, would think that the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans* had tears more at command than men now have: for the Orators wept as freely upon every occasion, as if that were true of them all, which *Æschines* \* said of *Demosthenes*, that \* *Æschin.* it was easier for them to weep, than for *contr.* others to laugh. And sometimes not only *Eresiph.* the Orators themselves, † but the Judges of † *Cic. pro* the whole Auditory were all in tears. The *Plancio.* great art of Oratory consisted in Action, (by *Pro Mi-* which is to be understood both the voice and *lon. Pro* gesture) as *Demosthenes*, that best knew, declared, and therefore though nothing were *Rabirio.* more

more common than for Historians, and Poets, and Philosophers to read their works to the people, yet the Orators seldom read their Orations; however, \* *Tully* sometimes did it. And from the time that *Augustus* read his Speeches, which he had occasion to use in the Senate, or to the People or Souldiers, it grew into a custom by his example and encouragement, and so continu'd.

\* Recite-  
tur oratio,  
quæ prop-  
ter ejus  
magnitu-  
dinem  
dicta de  
Scripto  
est Cic.

Pro Plancio. Ac ne periculum memoriz adiret, aut in ediscendo tempus absumeret, instituit recitare omnia. Suet. in August. c. 84. vid. ib. c. 89. Quanguam Orationes & nostri quidam & Græci leſttraverunt. Plin. lib. 7. Epist. 17.

† Qua  
(translati-  
one) fre-  
quentissi-  
me Sermo  
omnis  
utiter non  
modo ur-  
banus, sed  
etiam Ru-  
sticorum  
Siquidem  
est eorum  
gemmare  
vites, siti-

re agros, lætus esse segetes, luxurians frumenta. Nihil horum earum audacter, &c. Cic. Orator.

\* Joac. Kuhnii observat. ad Diog. Laert.

The common † Forms of Speech even among the *Roman* Country men, were so Metaphorical, that they will scarce bear a literal version into our Language. And the Philosophers themselves had customs which may seem very odd to us: it \* was a custom among them when they propounded a question, to offer with it a dryed Fig, and he that accepted of the Fig, thereby undertook to answer the question.

The Figurative expressions of the Prophets and their Types and Parables, were suitable to the customs of the places and times wherein they lived, and very fit to give a lively and affecting representation of the Message they had to deliver. Thus for instance, it was a

customary thing in those Countreys to rend their Garments, to pluck off their Hair, to go barefoot, and cover their faces, in time of grief and trouble, which would be looked upon as a certain sign of distraction amongst us, but was commonly done by the gravest and wisest men in these parts of the world. And the expressions of their Joy and other Passions, were proportionble to those of their sorrow. Now it was reasonable, that the Prophets in delivering their Prophecies should accommodate themselves both in their words and actions, to the people to whom they were to be delivered: For else they would never have been regarded, or would have made little or no impression upon their minds, which caused the false Prophets to take the same method, 1 Kings 22. 2.

It is \* *Origen's* observation, that the Pro-<sup>\* Origen. contr. Cels. lib. 1.</sup>phets sometimes had matters of small importance revealed to them, as when *Samuel* acquainted *Saul*, that the Asses were found, 1 Sam. 9. 20. that they might keep the people from going to false Prophets to be satisfy'd in such things; besides that, by this means they gained authority to be rely'd upon, when they had affairs of the greatest consequence to foretel. And there was reason, that in every case, they should make all necessary allowances for the infirmities of the people with whom they had to do, and should use all fitting compliances with them, that



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that they might the more prevail with them for their good.

\* Hier. in Abdiam. It is the custom of the Prophets, as \* St Jerom observes, when they speak against *Babylon*, the *Ammonites*, the *Moabites*, the *Philistines*, and other Nations, to use many expressions and idioms of the language of the people concerning

† Lightf. whom they speak. † One who was as con-  
Hebr. & versant in the *Jewish* Learning as most men  
Talmud. have been, tells us, that their Books abound e-  
exercit-on Matt. 13. very where with Parables, that Nation incli-  
3. ning by a kind of natural Genius to this sort of  
Familiare Rhetorick. And it is to be considered, that  
est syris several things, which are set down as Matter  
& maxi- of Fact, might not be actually done, but only  
me Palz- of Fact, might not be actually done, but only  
stinis ad represented as done, to make the more lively  
omnem impressi-  
fermo- upon the Hearers and Readers,  
nem suum who well enough understood, that it was not  
Parabolas necessary, that these things should be actually  
jungere, performed; but they might be only parabolical  
&c. Hier. descriptions or representations of Matter of  
in Matt. Fact, the better to illustrate and convey those  
18. 23. commands and instructions to their minds,

\* Hier. in which were to be delivered. Thus \* St Je-  
Hose. rom and Maimonides understood Ezekiel's ly-  
Proxm. & ing on his side for three hundred and ninety  
comment. days, and Hosea's marrying an Adulteress, only  
in c. 1. as Similitudes, or Parables and Figures of  
Maimon. Speech; and thus from the Ancient Rabbins,  
More Ne- they interpret both what is related of these  
voch. Part. two Prophets, and that which is said of Jere-  
2. c. 46. miah's hiding his Girdle in *Euphrates*. This  
was

was the most intelligible and effectual way that could be made use of to a people, among whom such figurative expressions were usual, and known to mean no more than what they were intended for. So *Jeremiah* is said to be

\* *set over the Nations, and over the Kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant,* Jer.

1. 10. because he was appointed to prophesie of all these things. *Ezekiel* speaks of himself as coming *to destroy the City*, because he prophesied that it should be destroyed, *Ezek.* 40.

3. and the same Prophet in his description of the City and the Temple, has delineated the Temple larger than all the earthly *Jerusalem*, and *Jerusalem* larger than the whole land of

*Canaan*, to shew the *Jews* the necessity of understanding him in a mystical and spiritual sense;

† as one has observed, who very well understood the dimensions of both. And thus *Ezekiel* was also carried from place to place in

*Vision* only, as the Text seems to express, *Ezek.*

11. 1. 40. 1, 2. as the *Jews* \* in *St. Jeron's*

time understood it, and as the *Chaldee* Paraphrase interprets it. But *Hosea* might be com-

manded either in vision or in reality to marry a woman who had been an Adulteress, but

† afterwards became chaste and vertuous;

interim, ut sequamur historiam, si meretricem, converterit ad pudicitiam, sed potius laudandus, quod ex mala bonam fecerit id. Comment. in Hof. c. 1.

† Nec culpandus; Propheta

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thereby to set an example to the *Israelites*, who had gone a whoring after other Gods, that if they would forsake their false Gods, and return to the true God, the God of their Fathers, he would still accept and receive them, in like manner as the Prophet had took an Adulteress to wife, upon assurance that she would prove faithful to him. However this be understood, these actions, and others of like nature, are to be look'd upon no otherwise than as the style of Scripture, or as certain ways of expressing the Divine Will to men. For the mind may be express'd by \* Actions as well as by Words, and whatever Actions were perform'd with this intention, properly come under the notion of style, or different ways and modes of expression; and all objections made against them under any other notion, proceed upon a mistake, and can be of no force.

\* Est enim  
Actio,  
quasi corporis  
quædam elo-  
quentia.  
Cic. Orator.

† Comment.  
in  
Apocal.  
Part. 1.

The Prophetick schemes of Speech which seem most strange to us, were usual with the Eastern Nations, † as Mr Mede shews of the *Indians*, *Persians* and *Egyptians*. The Revelation of St John chiefly consists of allusions to the Customs, and History, and Notions, and Language of the *Jews*, as he and Dr Lightfoot have shewn in many places, which are most contrary to our manner of speaking. And some passages allude to the customs of other Nations, well known and practis'd at that time. Thus the Slaves were wont to have their

their Masters Name or Mark upon their Forehead, and the Souldiers to have the name of their General upon their Right hand; and the like marks were wont to be received by men, in token that they had devoted themselves to their Gods: from whence we read of the mark of the *Beast* received by his Worshippers, *in their right Hand or in their Foreheads*, \* *Rev. 13. 16.* and of his *Fathers* \* *Name written in the Foreheads* of those, that stand in Mount *Sion* with the Lamb, *Rev. 14. 1.* *St Paul* alludes to the *Grecian Games* in his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, who were much addicted to those sports, and had one sort of them, the *Isthmian*, perform'd among them, *1 Cor. 9. 24, 25.* and he alludes to the distinction among the *Romans*, between Freemen and Slaves: For which he gives this reason, that it was in condescention to them, *I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh*, *Rom. 6. 19.* *Melchisedec* is said to be *without Father, without Mother, without descent*, *Heb. 7. 3.* because his Pedigree is unknown; which was a most significant way of expression to the *Jews*, who were so careful and exact in their Genealogies. But the very same manner of expression is also used † by † *Livy, Horace* and *Seneca* upon the like occasions.

Vid.  
Grot. ad  
loc.

† Patre  
nullo, ma-  
tre serva.  
Liv. lib.4.  
c. 3. —

nullis majoribus ortos Horac. Serm. lib.1. sat.6. — duos Romanos Reges  
esse quorum alter Patrem non habet, alter Matrem. Nam de servij Ma-  
tre dubitatur: Ançi Pater nullus; Numæ nepos dicitur. Senec. Epist.  
c. 8.

There is much of Nature, but very much likewise of Use and Custom, in the several Schemes and Forms of Rhetorick. We meet with a sudden change of the Person speaking, *Jer.* 16. 19, 20, 21. 17. 13. and with interlocutory discourse, *Isa.* 63. and \*many places of Scripture are obscure to us, for want of distinguishing the Persons who speak: Thus for instance, *Jer.* 20. 14. the Prophet seems transported abruptly, from one extremum to another, but if they be the words of the wicked (mention'd *ver.* 13.) under the divine vengeance, from the 14th *ver.* to the end of the Chapter, the sense will be more easy. This abrupt change of the Person is taken notice of by *Longinus*, as an excellency in *Homer*, *Hecateus* and *Demosthenes*; and the want of distinguishing the Persons speaking, has been a great cause of misunderstanding the Scriptures, \* as *Justin Martyr* and *Origen* observe.

\* Justin.  
Apol. 2.  
Origen.  
Philocal.  
c. 7.

Many Instances of the like nature might be given in the best Heathen Poets. And the reading the ancient Poets, is the best help for the understanding all other Authors of great Antiquity; for the ancients any Author is, the nearer his stile comes to Poetry. The first design of Writing was to delight, so as to be the better able to instruct, which made Verse much more ancient than Prose, and tho it be natural for Men to speak in Prose, and not in Verse, yet it seems the humour of *Greeks* would not bear the writing Philosophy

ophy in Prose till the time of *Cyrus*, for then  
 \* *Pliny* tells us *Pherecydes* first wrote in Prose,  
 which must be understood of Philosophy, for  
 he ascribes the first writing of Prose in History  
 to *Cadmus Milesius*. And the ancient Writers now  
 extant in Prose, *Herodotus*, *Thucydides*, and *Xe-*  
*nophon* have many Expressions, which are sel-  
 dom or never met withal besides, but in the  
 Poets. *H. Stephens* made a Collection of the  
 Poetical words used by *Xenophon*, which is  
 prefix'd to his Works. And the Orators both  
 among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, were as exact  
 and curious in the Feet and Measure of their  
 Prose, as the Poets could be in Verse. Great  
 part of the Scriptures is in Verse, and the dif-  
 ferent way of writing in different Ages and  
 Nations, appears in nothing more, than in  
 the several sorts of Poetry. That way of writ-  
 ing all Verse in Rhime, which in these parts  
 of the World is most in use and esteem, would  
 have been ridiculous to the *Greeks* and *Ro-*  
*mans*: Tho' the use of Rhime in Verse is so  
 far from being example in Antiquity, that it is  
 perhaps the most ancient of all ways of writ-  
 ing Verse. Acrosticks, tho' of no esteem, and  
 little us'd in many Ages and Countries, are of  
 great Antiquity. Verses compos'd in the A-  
 crostick and Alphabetical way, were found to  
 be a help to the Memory, and this benefit, and  
 the ornament which it was then supposed to  
 give to Poems, is the cause why it is sometimes  
 used in the Scriptures: and sometimes the In-

\* *Plin.*  
*Hist. Lib.*  
 5. c. 29.  
 7. c. 56.  
 vid. *Har-*  
*duin.* ad  
 loc.



piration was so strong upon the Writers mind, as to interrupt the Art and Method, which he had proposed to himself, as *Pf. 25. and 145.* or perhaps it might be customary upon certain occasions to omit some Letter in the Alphabet in such compositions, for reasons which we are ignorant of, but which might be very satisfactory and agreeable to the sense of those Times and Countries. \* The *οσι αεργη* is an example of this among the *Greeks*, used by *Pindar* and other ancient Poets: The old *†* *Spartan, Dorick* and *Æolick* Dialect changed *z* into *P*, the rough sound of this Letter being more agreeable it seems to those People; and if any of them had written *Acrosticks* and *Alphabetical Poems*, *z* would have been omitted. *Rhophalick Verses*, which begin with a *Monosyllable*, every word encreasing by one syllable more than the former, are to be found in *Homer*: and the *Leomine* or *Monkish Verses* with a double *Rhime*, one in the middle, and the other at the end, are not without precedent: To say nothing of the Poems composed of divers sorts of Verse, and framed into the shape of several things by *Simmias Rhodius*, some of which are ascribed to *Theocritus*. The Repe- titions so frequent in *Homer*, were not for want of words, (for no Author ever wanted them less than he) but out of choice, though latter Poets have not thought fit to imitate him in this, and *Martial* turn'd it to Ridicule. It is certain that nothing is more various, than the

\* *Athenz.*  
lib. 10.  
c. 21.

† *Casanb.*  
in *Athen.*  
lib. 8. c. 11.

the Wit and Fancy of Man, and it is as certain, that whoever would write to any purpose, must write in some such manner, as the temper of the people, to whom he writes, will bear, and as their customs require.

But before I leave this particular, it may be proper to consider the stile of Scripture, in the Metaphorical and Figurative use of words, in speaking of the Works and Attributes of God. There never was any Book written in a strict and literal propriety of words, because all Languages abound in Metaphors, which by constant use become perhaps better known to the Natives of a Country, than the original words themselves, and in process of time often cause them to be quite laid aside. But then this borrowed and Metaphorical sense of words may be very strange to Men of other Countries, especially when they are taken for things peculiar to the place, where they are used. The *Horn of the Son of Oyl* signifies in our way of expression a very fruitful Hill, Isa. 5. 1. and *Horn* signified strength in the Hebrew Tongue, as familiarly, as *Robur* or *Oak* signifies the same in Latin.

And not only the Valleys are said to shout and sing, Ps. 65. 13. but the best Fruits in the Land, are in the Hebrew called the singing of the Land, Gen. 43. 11. The word *Rock* is often used to denote the Almighty Power of God, and by the Septuagint and vulgar Latin, is sometimes translated God. For their Rock is

*not as our Rock, even our Enemies being Judges,* Deut. 32. 31. those versions render it *their Gods*, and *our God*, and in like manner, v. 4, 15, 18. Ps. 31. 3. 73. 26. *Is there any God besides me? yea there is no God, I know not any,* Isai. 46. 8. in the Hebrew it is, there is no Rock, as the Margin of our Bibles remarks.

This use of Metaphors ariseth partly from the likeness that is perceiv'd between things, which makes one thing to be exprest by another, and gives a delightful illustration to the things discoursed of, and partly from our want of fit words to exprest the various natures of things, especially of things spiritual, which we commonly speak of in Negative terms, and rather deny, that they are like things sensible, than positively affirm what they are: Thus we say that they are immaterial, invissible, incorruptible, &c. And when we speak positively of them, we must use such words, as sensible objects can furnish us withal, since we can have no other; for we understand their Nature so imperfectly, that we are not able to frame a Language on purpose to exprest it; and he who should go about such a work, would neither be understood by others, nor well known what he meant himself. But of all Beings, God himself is so far above our comprehension, that we can never speak of him, in expressions suitable to his Divine Nature, and therefore when true conceptions are had of him, it is fittest to speak of

of him in such terms, as many serve to raise and preserve in us a due sense of Gods Honour, and of our duty to him. The Reasons then, why God is often spoken of in the Scriptures, after the manner in which we are wont to speak of men, may be reduced to these particulars.

1. The use of Metaphorical and Figurative expressions is usual in all Languages, and no Language is sufficient to set forth the Majesty and Attributes of God.

2. The peculiar Nature and Genius of the Hebrew Tongue, inclined or constrained the Writers, in that Language, to express themselves in this manner, *Gen. 9. 5. at the hand of every Beast will I require it*, that is, I will require it of every Beast. *Sin* in the Hebrew signifies a *Sin-offering*, as it is translated, and must of necessity be understood in many places of Scripture, and in this sense Christ was made *sin for us*, 2 Cor. 5. 21. We read *Jos. 24. 27. that Joshua said unto all the people, behold this stone shall be a witness unto us. For it hath heard all the words of the Lord, which he spake unto us, it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.* This might have been a very improper and unintelligible Speech to another people, but was most significant and emphatical to the people of Israel, who well understood upon what account sense was often ascribed to inanimate things, as *Gen. 31. 52. Num. 20. 8. Dent. 4. 26. 30. 19. 32. 1.* and  
af-

afterwards frequently by the Prophets.

3. An exprels Law was made against the worshipping of God under any Image or Similitude, and the people are put in mind, that they *saw no similitude*, but only *heard a voice*, when the Lord spake to them from the Mount, *Dent.* 4. 12. and that he is without change or repentance, *Num.* 23. 19. *1 Sam.* 15. 29. *Malach.* 3. 6.

4. When this caution had been given, and such a Law made, it cannot be expected, but that the Divine Writers should make use of such expressions, as were commonly used, and were as commonly understood in a Metaphorical or improper sense, when applied to God; to give the more force and emphasis to their discourse, \* *Maimonides* has proved from the propriety of the Hebrew words, that the *Image* and *Likeness* of God, in which man is said to have been made, is to be understood of the faculties of his Mind; and he lays this down as a general and known rule amongst the Jews, *Loquitur Lex secundum linguam Filiorum hominum*, and he likewise observes that both *Onkelos* and *Jonathan* have in their Paraphrases taken care to give the true sense of such expressions, as seem to imply any thing corporal in God. The Scriptures make mention of his eyes, and hands and feet, to exprels the effects of those Actions, which are performed by men with these members: and when it was said, *it repented the Lord that he had made*

\* Maimonid. More Nevoch. Par. 1. c. 1, 26, 27, 28, 36. 48.

made man on the Earth, and it grieved him at his heart, Gen. 6. 6. This was well understood to mean no more than that God acted, as men are wont to do, when they change their minds, and repent and grieve at what they have done, and that he would certainly destroy the world which he had made: for Moses himself instructs the Children of Israel, that God is without any bodily shape or substance, and therefore cannot be said to have any heart, or to be grieved at his heart in the same sense, that it is said of men. And Num. 23. 19. it is declared, that *God is not a man, that he should lye, neither the Son of man, that he should repent.* And when God says that *it repented him that he had set up Saul to be King,* 1 Sam. 15. 11. this is explain'd v. 29. where we read, that *the strength of Israel will not lye, nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent:* and yet again in the last verse it is said, that *the Lord repented, that he had made Saul King over Israel.* The most careless writer could not so soon and so often forget himself: but what is said of Gods repenting, is to be taken in an improper and figurative sense, to imply that God would act in that case, as men act when they repent of what they have done, tho without any change of mind, or any grief, or other passion in him attending it: the effect was the same as if God had repented, and therefore by a *Metonymy* the effect is exprest by that which in men

is



is wont to be the cause of such effects; the repentance was not the cause of it; but the reason and state of the case, which he had fully known and considered from all eternity, and therefore could not be surprized, or moved to any alteration of Judgment by it. *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, Judg. 10. 16. or, it was *shortned*, as the Hebrew word is literally translated in the Margin, that is, according to \* *Maimonides*, the

\* Maimon, More Nevuch. Part 1. c. 41. 47. Part. 3. c. 24.

† Non enim aliquid ignorat Deus, ut examinando cognoscat, sed sciat Deus, ita dixit beatus Job, ut scire alios faciat, secundum illud: tentat vos Deus Dominus, ut sciat, utrum diligatis eum, id est, ut scire ceteros faciat. Hieron. in Job. c. 31. 6.

Lords mind was shortened from afflicting them, or he had no longer a mind to punish them. When God<sup>s</sup> is said to see, the meaning is, that he knows what is done; when he is said to hear, this signifies, that he understands what is said. † *Now I know that thou fearest God*, Gen. 22. 12. that is, now I have had the proof of it, and have

made it evident, that I know it. *To prove thee, to know what was in thine heart*, Deut. 8. 2. is the same, as to make that appear, and become known, which I know to be in thine heart, Gen. 12. 5. the Lord is said to come down to see the City and Tower of Babel, and Gen. 18. 20. *Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see, whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not, I will know*: which implies, that God is not forward

ward or willing to punish, but that he proceeds as men do in things about which they use most care and deliberation. God is represented as a good Governour, who is unwilling to believe ill Reports, and will make a full enquiry and inspection into the case, before he punish offenders; or in short, here is an illustration in Fact of that adorable character, which God proclaims of himself, *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth*, *Exod. 34. 6.* God says, that he could not destroy Sodom till Lot was escaped out of it, *Gen. 19. 22.* and to Moses he says, *Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them*, *Exod. 32. 10.* But we must not imagin that the Reasons and Motives which Moses there represents to God in his prayer in behalf of the people of *Israel*, could prevail more with him, than his own infinite Wisdom and Goodness, or that he could not have preserved Lot in the midst of Sodom, as well as he delivered *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego* out of the Fiery Furnace. But these things are thus exprest for an encouragement in Righteousness, and to teach us dependance upon God; for the righteous have power with God as well as with men, and shall prevail, *Gen. 32. 28.* It was an exercise and trial of the Faith and Charity of Moses, and is proposed as an example of Faith and Charity to all, who should

should read that account of him. Besides, he was a Type of Christ, and as such, was to make intercession and attonement for the sins of the People, *Exod.* 32. 30. For Christ before his coming in the Flesh exercis'd his Mediatory power, as to the visible administration of it, by those who were appointed to be his Types and Representatives here upon Earth, which may give a satisfactory account of that power, which *Abraham, Jacob and Moses*, and others are said to have had with God.

The summ of all is, that to give the more Force and Life to the Discourses of the Prophets, and to render them the more effectual to the ends, for which they were designed, God, who is by the infinite excellency of his Nature, incapable of any Passion, is pleas'd to be represented as subject to Love, and Anger, and Hatred, and all the Passions of Humanity; and He, who knows perfectly all events from Eternity, is contented even to seem sometimes to doubt of the effects of his designs and proposals, and of the events of humane Actions; to shew, as \* *Origen, St. Jerom and Theodoret* have observ'd, the freedom of Men, and to declare, that their destruction is from themselves. He speaks to us in the Language of Men, and assumes to himself all the Passions of humane nature, that by any means sinners may be perswaded to turn to him; he is described as angry, and grieved at the sins of Men, and as one, who rejoyleth at their Repentance:

not

\* *Origen*  
*Philocal.*  
*c. 23. Hieron. &*  
*Theodo-*  
*ret.*  
*ad Ezek.*  
*11. 5.*

not that the Divine Nature can be capable of Anger, or Grief, or Rejoycing, which imply change and imperfection, and therefore must be impossible in the most absolutely perfect Being: but because Men are wont to be angry, when they punish, and to be grieved when those do amiss whom they would have do well, and are wont to rejoice when they begin to reform; therefore to set forth, that God will certainly punish unrepenting Sinners, and receive the returning Penitent, and reward the Righteous, both the Goodness and Justice of God are explain'd in such terms, as may most move and affect Men, to shew that the punishments he inflicts, will in the end be as grievous, as if he receiv'd some loss and disappointment by the obstinacy of the Wicked; and that he will as bountifully reward the Good, as if they had done him some great benefit and kindness, and had made some addition to his own Joy and Happiness, which is infinite and eternal, and therefore incapable of any.

3. The *Decorum* or suitableness of the matter in the stile of Scripture. This is to be considered with respect to the Persons, the Occasion, and Time and Country; the Rules of Decency being variable according to Circumstances, not fix'd and immutable, as the Precepts of Morality are. \* *Maimonides* has observ'd, that the Holy Tongue has no words to express things obscene: and 'tis very remarkable

\* More  
Nevoch.  
Par. 3. c. 8.

markable, that in those ruder Ages (as they are commonly reckon'd) the *Hebrews* had peculiar forms of Decency in their Expressions, upon all occasions which required them. And to *know* in that signification, which it hath *Gen. 4. 1.* and in many other places of Scripture, was likewise used by the *Greeks*, and is

\* *Hermog. de Invent.*  
lib. 4. c. 11.

† *Vid. Athenæ lib. 1.*  
c. 4. cum *Casaub. Animad. De Antiquis illustrissimus quisq; Pastor erat, ut ostendit Græca & Latina Lingua & veteres Poetæ. Varro de Re Rustic. lib. 2. c. 1.*

\* *Herodot. 6. c. 137.*

particularly taken notice of by \* *Hermogenes* for the modesty of it.

We find the Heroes of † *Homer* employ'd in as mean Offices as the Patriarchs, and \* *Herodotus* declares, that in Ancient Times, the *Greeks* had no Servants, but did their own work themselves, or had no other help but that of their Children;

and 'tis reasonable, that their manner of speech should be suitable to their way of living, and that the one should have no more of delicacy in it than the other; and if there be any thing in their Writings, which is not so agreeable to the niceness of latter Times, it is an argument of their innocence and purity, and of a native simplicity of manners, void of Pride, and of shame arising from Guilt.

In matters of History, several things may be mentioned, not so much for their own sake, as because they were memorable in those times, and might help to keep up the Remembrance of other things more considerable. If *Moses* has related, who *found the Mules in the Wilderness*, (for the original word is capable of

a different signification) \* *Homer* has made the same observation. The characters and speeches of persons in the Scriptures are exceeding natural, and discover all the unaffected and inimitable marks of Truth. They are short, and contain such circumstances and thoughts as are not far fetcht, but arise from the matter in hand, and have manifest influence upon the actions themselves. This may be seen in the History of *Joseph* and his Brethren, and in several other passages, which are so naturally related, that in some of them the manner of Relation, which manifestly speaks the truth of what is delivered, has given occasion to the cavils of such as have not well considered it. *Saul* enquired of *Abner*, whose Son *David* was; *Abner* answered, he did not know; *David* was brought to *Saul*, who asked him the same question, 1 Sam. 17. 55, 58. yet *Saul* had sent to *Jesse* for his Son *David* to play before him upon the Harp, 1 Sam. 16. 19. *Grotius* imputes this forgetfulness to the Distemper which *Saul* then laboured under, and to the multiplicity of his affairs. But was it ever expected of any King, that he should remember the names of the Fathers of all his Servants? *Jesse* was an obscure man, and *David* had not then been so much taken notice of, as that his Father's name should be known in *Saul's* Court, and *Abner* being absent with the Army, might never see *David* nor hear of



him before. In the Relation of *Saul's* Death, the Messenger who brought the news had declared himself to be an *Amalekite*, yet *David* afterwards enquires of him, *whence art thou?* But nothing could be more natural than for a man in that consternation to ask that question so soon after, 2 *Sam.* 1. 8, 13. Some have alledged, that they could conceive no reason for that passage concerning the Arrows which *Jonathan* was to shoot, to give *David* notice whether he were to go or stay, because tho he did shoot in that manner, which by agreement was to be a sign to him that he must be gone, yet they met and discoursed together upon the place, after *Jonathan* had sent his Servant away. But it seems they had a more favourable opportunity than they expected of conversing there: and tho this happened beyond expectation, yet the Sacred Historian is so punctual as to acquaint us with that sign which was given by an agreement made between *David* and *Jonathan*, when they supposed that it would not have been safe for them to come to one another, 1 *Sam.* 20.

There is no nicer subject than when a man is forc'd to speak of himself: Truth, if it be to his own praise, will be rejected as falsehood, or at least censured for vanity; and if he blame himself, this will be suspected as designed only to extort a commendation from others. And yet there are certain times and  
occa-

occasions, in which the wisest and best men have thought it requisite to speak with great freedom and openness of themselves. There is a deference owing to Authority, and a Reverence due to years, and therefore Ancient men and men in Power may speak, as we say, *with Authority*; and any man may speak in his own vindication what would not become him in another case: Every man has a Right to defend his own Innocence by all lawful means, and to speak Truth cannot be unlawful, tho it be in his own commendation; nor can there be any indecency in it, when it is forced from him, for the good not only of himself, but of others, who may suffer by the scandal thrown upon him. All these circumstances concurred in St Paul's case, who had the Authority of an Apostle, and the Reverence due to Paul the Aged; and the Interest of Souls to plead for what he yet terms *the folly* of commending himself in his own necessary Vindication. Plutarch in a set discourse upon this subject determines, that a man may praise himself, when it is necessary for his own defence, and when he may benefit others by it. \* Nestor speaks of himself <sup>Hom. Ili.</sup> with as great commendation, as he could have <sup>x.</sup> spoken of any other man, but when the Authority and Reverence due to his Age warranted that freedom, and the necessity of affairs required it of him, it was not only allowable, but very proper and requisite.

† Nihil  
necesse est  
mihi de  
meipso  
dicere,  
quan-  
quam est  
id quidem  
senile,  
ætatiq;

† Tully observes, that he might claim this privilege from his old Age. And *Socrates* himself at his Tryal speaks very freely in his own commendation, which has never been mentioned to his dispraise, but as an argument of his courage and innocence.

nostræ conceditur. Videtisne ut apud Homerum sepissime Nestor de virtutibus suis prædicet? Tertiam enim jam ætatem hominum vixerat, nec erat ei verendum, ne vera de se prædicans nimis videretur aut insolens aut loquax. Cic. de Senect.

† Sum Pius Æneas——

— Fama super æthera notus  
Æn. i.

The Good Æneas I am called, a Name  
While Fortune favour'd not unknown to  
Fame.

Turnus ego haud ulli veterum  
virtute secundus

Devoeo——Æn. ii.

I Turnus not the least of all my  
Name

Devote my Soul——

† Virgil makes *Æneas* and *Turnus* speak of themselves in such a manner, as is hardly reconcileable to the Rules of Decency of our Times. Mr *Dryden* in his Translation saw it necessary to soften his expressions, that they might be

more suitable to our customs and manners. But certainly if this were not agreeable to his own Age, it was at least to that notion which *Virgil* had of the Age in which *Æneas* lived, or else so great a Master of Decorum would never have put such words into the mouth of his Hero. Yet these very words he had from † *Homer*, who makes them to be spoken by *Ulysses*. *Servius* says, Heroes were wont thus to speak.

† ὁ μὲν  
κλέος ἔ-  
γραν ἱκεῖ  
Odyss. ix.

\*Poets likewise assumed a liberty of speaking bold expressions concerning themselves, upon pretence that they were acted by some Divine Power, and there-

Jamq; opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira nec ignis  
Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustus. Ovid Metam.  
l. 15.  
Exegi monumentum ære perennius. Horat. carm. lib. 3. Od. 30.

fore were called Prophets; which is an argument that in the common opinion of men, inspired Writers might use such forms of Speech as would not be proper nor decent for others to use. And this liberty was taken by Orators as well as Poets, when the occasion seemed to require it, as may be observed in \* *Isocrates*. For the ancient Orators too by *Longinus's* observation, pretended to something more than humane, and would be thought to speak by some kind of impulse; upon which account this liberty might be allowed them.

\* Panegr.  
& Panathen.

But it may well be thought needless for me to have used so many words on this subject, when there is so little occasion for any objection of this nature in the Holy Scriptures; and where-ever there can be any pretence for it, it has been considered in its proper place: but I thought it might not be labour ill bestowed, to shew here besides, how bad Criticks they are that can object at this rate. I will say further, that the passage, *Tob. 5. 16.* concerning the Dog which followed *Tobias* (which has given occasion to unwary and unskilful men to insult with so much scorn over a Book that is very useful, tho not of Divine Inspira-

tion) is not only innocent, but agreeable to the best patterns of Antiquity,

\* *ἀμα τὸ γὰρ δὴ καὶ αἶψα ἀγχοῖ*  
*ἵππευτο.* Odiss. ii.  
 Nec non & gemini custodes limine  
 ab alto

Procedunt, Gressumq; canes comi-  
 tantur herilem. Æn. 8.

Hoc & in Homero lectum est—  
 & in Historia Romana, quæ ait: Sy-  
 phax inter duas canes stans scipio-  
 nem appellavit. Serv.

\* *Homer and Virgil*; who thought it a very proper and natural ornament of their Poems to describe Dogs following their Masters; *Homer* speaking of *Telemachus*, and *Virgil* of *Evander*. And *Servius* pro-

duceth an Example of the same thing out of the *Roman History*.

IV. As to the Method used in the Holy Scriptures, there is no reason to expect that Prophecies should be written according to the order of time in which they were delivered, or that Histories should be digested into Diaries or Annals, since there may be Reasons, whether known or unknown to us, why they should be otherwise placed: And thus the Ly-  
 ric Poets, \* who pretended to Enthusiasm, and an imitation, as it were, of Prophecy, do not confine themselves to observe any order of Time. Some things last foretold might be first to be fulfilled; or some things were more or less remarkable, or concerned the *Jews* more or less than others; but generally in the Prophetical Books of Scripture, what concerns the same subject is put together, tho fore-told, or falling out at different times, that the clearer and more distinct view may be had of it. This, as \* *St Jerom* observes, is the cause of divers

\* Vid. Hi-  
 eron. ad  
 Hieremias  
 cap. 21,  
 25.

† Hieron.  
 ad Ezech.  
 cap. 24,  
 32.

Trans-

Transpositions in point of Time, in the Prophecies of *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel*; and † he takes notice, that *Daniel* having set down the Prophecies, which had relation to the several Reigns of *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Belshazzar*, *Darius* or *Cyrus*, according to the order of Time, afterwards declares the Revelations that were made to him, that had no dependance upon the times in which they were made, but were written for the benefit of Posterity. But the several Transpositions in the Scripture are sufficiently accounted for by Commentators. And it must be observed, that the Sacred Writers mention no more of Civil affairs than was necessary to their purpose; and therefore in many things they refer to the Histories then extant, for a fuller account of them: their design was not to write a compleat History of all events, but they confine themselves to such as were most fit for them to take notice of, and keep within the compass of their proper business.

† Id. ad  
Dan. c. 7.

It was expedient that the same Doctrines should be repeated in divers places of Scripture, and interspersed with other things, according to no certain Art or Method, because this prevents their being corrupted or falsified, as they might have been, if they had been all reduced to several distinct Heads, and placed according to the Rules of Art. If one Prophet repeats what another Prophet had said, this is to give it a new confirmation, to re-



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vive the remembrance, and shew the certainty and importance of it. It is ordinary in the best Authors not only to find the same things repeated in divers places of their Works, but to meet with them repeated in the very same words: thus *Hocartes*, *Xenophon* and *Demosthenes* transcribe in one part of their Works what they have written in another; but none, I think, so frequently as *Demosthenes*.

\* *curiosities*  
 γὰρ οὕτω  
 παλαιῶν  
 τοῦ τὰ  
 λαοῦ,  
 Ulp. E.  
 narr. Oiat.  
 Demo-  
 sthen.  
 cont. Mi-  
 diam.

*Ulpian* has observed, that this was a usual thing with the Ancient Writers. It was customary likewise with the Philosophers, or to allude to the Verses of *Homer*, and to apply them with little variation upon all occasions, as may be seen frequently in *Diogenes Laertius*.

All the cavils therefore that are made against the style of Scripture proceed from ignorance of Antiquity, and from rashness in judging of ancient Times and foreign Countries by our own. Whoever would either delight or profit, must speak and act in some measure according to the genius of the people with whom he converses: and if we will but read the Scriptures, with the same candour and respect with which we read the Writings of Human Authors, and consider the Times, and Persons, and the Occasions upon which they were written; there is nothing that can seem harsh or improper either in the words or actions of the persons inspired (for it was the manner of those Countries to speak by their actions

actions almost as much as in words. ) If we will but observe the circumstances in which the several parts of the Scriptures were written, we shall find cause to admire the Simplicity, and Plainness and Modesty of the style of the Scriptures.

In many Books of the Scriptures the style is sublime and elegant, beyond any thing to be found in other Writings, and yet as natural as if it could not have been otherwise exprest; and this is the true excellency of style, that it be plain and natural, and yet eloquent. *Longinus* gives a high character of *Moses's* style in a Book, the design whereof is to represent the most perfect Idea of Eloquence: indeed such is the fitness both in Verse and Prose of the words and style of *Moses*, so admirably suited to the subject upon all occasions, as if he had been to prescribe a pattern of true Eloquence, as well as to enact Laws. *H. Stephens* has observed that there is a great resemblance in *Herodotus* to the style of the Scriptures: *Herodotus* had *Homer* in his view throughout his History, and *Homer's* expressions are the same with those used in the Scriptures, in many instances, as particularly, when he so often mentions the children of the *Trojans*, and the children of the *Greeks*, as the Scriptures mention the children of *Israel*; and other Greek Authors say, the children of the Physicians, as the Scriptures say, the children of the *Bride-chamber*, and the children of *Light*.

\* *Grotius*

\* Grot. ad  
4. Reg.  
19. 2. &  
ad Ezech.  
initio.

† Pref. to  
Pindarick  
Odes, and  
Notes upon  
Pind. Ode  
on Isai. 34.

*Grotius* compares *Isaiab* to *Demosthenes*; a sublime, but a most natural and judicious writer: the same Author compares *Ezekiel* to *Homer* for the beauty and nobleness of his style.

† Mr *Cowley* compares the Prophets, especially *Isaiab*, to *Pindar*: but of *Pindar* he says, that if a man should undertake to translate him word for word, it would be thought that one mad man had translated another. For which he gives this reason, that we must consider in *Pindar* the great difference of time betwixt his Age and ours, which changes as in Pictures, at least the colours of Poetry; the no less difference betwixt the Religions and Customs of our Countries, and a thousand particularities of Places, Persons and Manners, which do but confusedly appear to our eyes at so great a distance; and lastly, we must consider that our ears are strangers to the Musick of his numbers, which sometimes (especially in Songs and Odes) almost without anything else, makes an excellent Poet. And of *David* he observes, that the best Translators have been so far from doing Honour, or at least Justice to that Divine Poet, that *methinks*, says he, they revild him worse than *Shimei*. And *Buchanan* himself comes, in his opinion, no less short of *David*, than his Country does of *Judea*. Yet *Isaiab* and the rest of the Prophets and the *Psalms* are translated into our Language word for word, as far as it is possible for one Language to be thus rendered into another: and notwithstanding all the differences of Time, and Place, and Customs,

stoms, and Persons, no sensible man reads them in the *English* Tongue, but he must acknowledge that their style, with all these disadvantages, is truly great and excellent.

Whereas \* there are none of the Heathen Authors, that are so much esteemed, which, if they were literally translated, as the Scriptures are, would bear the reading, but they would appear ridiculous and impossible to be understood.

\* Quod si non videtur Linguae gratiam interpretatione mutari, Homerum ad verbum exprimat in Latinum. Plus aliquid dicam: eundem in the lingua prosa verbis interpretetur, videbit ordinem ridiculum, & Poetam eloquentissimum vix loquentem. Hieron. Pref. in Chron. Euseb.

For the Spirit, and Genius, and peculiar Idioms of most Tongues being so very different one from another, and depending upon the Customs and Humours of the people of several Countries, it was the evident care and providence of God, to cause great part of the Scriptures, tho written by so many different men, and at such distant times, and some Books of them in the earlier Ages of the World, to be penned in such a language and style, as is most natural, and which without any want of Art exceeds the most artificial and studied Eloquence in sublime and noble thoughts and expressions, and in all the beauties and ornaments of Speech: and yet, which in all the necessary points of Salvation is easy to be understood, under all the disadvantages of a Verbal Translation; by men of ordinary capacities, who live so many Ages after. The Prophecies of *Isaiah* cannot be read, or heard,

or thought of without being moved by them : with what Life then, with what Zeal and Flame must they have been delivered ? And what a mighty Blessing was such a Prophet to his own Age, and to all succeeding Generations ? Of Royal Blood, and of a Style and Behaviour suitable to his Birth ; of Divine Virtues, and of Divine Eloquence ! He declares things, which were not to be fulfilled till many Ages afterwards, as plainly as if he had seen them before his eyes, and would make all others to see them ; he speaks of Christ as clearly, as if with *Simeon* he had had his Saviour in his arms, or with the Wise men had been kneeling down before him, and presenting him with more precious Gifts, than any they had to offer ; and describes his Passion as fully, as if he had followed him through every part of it, and having been Crucified with him, had been just entering with him into Paradise. If this be thought a Digression from my subject, I hope it may easily be excused ; for who can speak of *Isaiah* without a Digression, when men choose the food of Swine, and trample upon Pearls, as things of no value, as if he and the other Prophets had always the hard fate to preach to the *Rulers of Sodom*, and the *People of Gomorrah*.

But if the style of the Scriptures be not in all places alike, excellent and exact, let it be considered, that

I. The

1. The same stile is not suitable to all subjects, and the stile and dialect is different, according to the difference of the matter, or of the persons, for whose use it was immediately designed. What concerns the *Assyrian* Monarchy in the Prophet *Daniel*, is in the *Chaldee* Tongue, and what relates directly to the *Jews* is in the *Hebrew*. Part of *Ezra* is in *Chaldee*, being a relation of Matter of Fact contained in the *Chaldee* Chronicles; and *Jer.* 10. 11. is in the same Tongue, that the *Jews* might reject the Idolatry of the *Chaldeans* in their Language, and openly profess their own abhorrence of it. And as upon these occasions the Language of Scripture is changed, with respect to the subject and the persons concerned, so the stile must be sometimes altered upon the same account.

2. Artificial strains of Rhetorick, whereby the passions are moved to the utmost heighth, were very necessary to gain a present point, and carry a Cause by a violent and sudden transport, before Reason could interpose. But Religion being to be propounded upon reasonable motives, there could be no need of Rhetorick, when the evidence of those Miracles by which it was established, afforded so many other more certain and powerful means of perswasion. The Scriptures are not written in the *enticing words of mans wisdom*, but in truth and simplicity, and therefore might well have been without any advantages of Eloquence,



quence, as needing no such helps to recommend them to serious and impartial Minds : And tho God has been pleased to condescend so far to the infirmities of men, as to convey very much of his Revealed Will to us, in such a style, as for its own sake is highly to be esteemed and admired. Yet it was fit that other parts of the Scriptures should have the bare force and evidence of truth only, to convince men, that it might appear that our Religion was propagated not by any Arts of humane Eloquence, but by its own Worth and Excellency : For Eloquence was not used, where it would have been most necessary, if any humane means could be so, in asserting and propagating the Divine Truth. In the propagation of the Gospel all the Eloquence, as well as the Power, and Prejudices, and Vices of Mankind were combined against it, and yet less elegance and accuracy of style was employed by the Apostles and Evangelists, than had been before used by *Moses* and the Prophets, who yet had nothing which seemed so strange and wonderful to deliver. Which is one great argument of the Power and Efficacy of the Gospel, that it could prevail so much against all the opposition in the world, only by telling a plain Truth, and in the plainest manner. For where the thing is evident, the fewest and plainest words are best, as in Mathematical Demonstrations, it is enough if men make themselves to be understood : this likewise

likewise was all that the Apostles aimed at, their Cause and Doctrine was so certain and demonstrable, that any words, which did but fully and clearly express their meaning, were sufficient for their purpose; their Rhetorick lay in the things themselves, not in words: there is no great Art required to prove that to any man, which he sees with his eyes, and therefore as the power of Miracles was greater under the Gospel, than under the Law, so there was less need of Eloquence in the New Testament than in the Old. Yet it cannot be denied, as a † Learned Critick has declared, † Mer. that St Paul in some kind and upon some subjects is as eloquent as ever man was; not inferiour to 4. Demosthenes (in whose writings he believes that Apostle had been much conversant) or Æschines, or any other anciently most admired.

Τὸν δὲ γλῶτταν ἰδιωτεύοντες  
τῇ γὰρ μὴν περὶ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἀντιοῖς  
διδασκαλίᾳ θείᾳ καὶ παρὰδοξατοῖς  
δυνάμει θαυοῦνται, τὸ μὲν ἐν πε-  
ποιθεῖ καὶ τῇ γλῶττι λέγων τὰ οὐ δι-  
δασκαλῶν μαθήματα πρὸς βελόνῃ  
ὥστε ὁρῶντες, ὥστε ἐκ χειρὸς.

Euseb. Hist. lib. iii. c. 24.

† Mer.  
Cafaub. of  
Enthus. 6.

3. It is reasonable to believe, that the Scriptures may be written in the Words and Phrases of the Penmen of the several parts of them, and that the Holy Ghost might permit them to use their own style, so directing them still, and over-ruling them in every word and sentence, that it should infallibly express his own full sense and meaning, and speak the Truth, which he inspired. And therefore tho there be divers styles in the Scriptures, yet this is no prejudice to the Authority and Certainty

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tainty of them. *Isaiah*, for instance, being of the Blood Royal, and educated at Court, may write in a more refined and lofty style; and *Amos*, who was brought up among the *Herdsmen of Tekoa*, may speak in a more humble strain, and fetch his Metaphors from lower and meaner things, and yet the sense and substance of both may be from the Holy Ghost, and as exactly true and infallible, as if every word and syllable were dictated by him. But this has been already considered under its proper head.

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C H A P. IV.

*Of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures.*

**W**HATEVER uncertainty there can be supposed to be, concerning the Canon of the Holy Scriptures, or the Catalogue and Number of Books of Divine Revelation, this ought to be made no objection against the certainty of Divine Revelation itself, or against the authority of those Books of Scripture, which are universally acknowledged and received by all Churches. For if this be a true way of arguing, then whatever we are ignorant of, must be an argument against the certainty of what we know; and by consequence no man can be certain of any thing, since the wisest man is ignorant of so many things,

things, that he knows very little in comparison of what he is ignorant of. And as to the matter in hand, there is, scarce any Author of great note and fame, but that Criticks have had Disputes concerning the number of his genuine Works; and yet this has never been thought any prejudice to such as are allowed by all to be genuine. Would not that man make himself ridiculous, who should reject the *Philippicks* of Tully, or *Virgil's Æneid*, as spurious, because other Books, either doubtful, or counterfeit, have past under the names of these two Authors? If some Books have been disputed, the rest certainly are genuine beyond all dispute, because they have never been called into question or doubt.

Now if these Books only were of Divine Revelation, concerning which there has never been any Dispute, they contain all things necessary to be believed and practised; and as to the rest, concerning which there has been any controversy, tho they be exceeding useful to explain divers things, which we find in these, and perhaps to teach us some things (not essential to our Religion, nor necessary to Salvation) which are not to be found elsewhere: yet they are not absolutely necessary to be received, because whatever Doctrines are absolutely necessary, they are to be found fully and plainly delivered in those Books of Scripture, which have ever been received without contradiction or dispute. Many men were undoubtedly  
H saved;

saved, before the writing of these controwerted Books, nay, before the writing of any Books at all; Writings being no further necessary, than as they are necessary to convey the knowledge of what is written, when the things now written could be as well known without writing, Books were not necessary: and tho' for after ages it became necessary, that the Prophets and Apostles and Evangelists should consign their Doctrine to writing, yet no more of their writings can be absolutely necessary to be known by us, than what may be sufficient to instruct us in the ways of salvation. It is the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God to afford us more than is absolutely necessary for our spiritual and eternal Life, as he has done for our Natural, and it is a great sin in any man to reject any means of Salvation or Instruction, which God has been pleased to allow: but still that man would sustain his Natural Life and Health, who should think all, that is not necessary to the support of it, *common or unclean*, and not fit to be used for food. And if a man without any of his own fault or neglect should come to the knowledge only of the uncontrowerted Books, he would find them abundantly sufficient to answer all the ends of Revelation, and to procure his Salvation. It cannot be denied but that one infallible Authority is as great a Security, as never so many could be: but the same Doctrines are taught in several places of

of Scripture, and we ought to be thankful to God for it, that he has been pleased to furnish us with so much more than is absolutely necessary, and to repeat the same things in sundry places and in divers manners, for our further instruction and confirmation in the Faith: tho it would be absurd and wicked to say, that he who believes all the points of necessary Faith, upon the authority of any one Book of Scripture, has no sufficient means of Salvation, unless he likewise believe them upon the Authority of all the rest.

Not that I suppose any wise and good man can now find any cause to doubt of any Book in the Old or New Testament, whether it be genuine or no; but to suppose the most and the worst that can be supposed, if those Books which at any time have been called in question, were not only dubious, but certainly spurious, the remaining Books, which were never doubted of, are sufficient for all the necessary ends and purposes of a Revelation: and therefore this ought to be no objection against the Authority of the Scriptures, that the Authority of some Books has been formerly matter of controversy.

I shall enter upon no discourse concerning the Apocryphal Books, the authority whereof has been so often and so effectually disproved by Protestants, that the most learned Papists have now little to say for them, but are forced only to fly to the authority of their



Church, which is in effect to beg the thing in question, or to beg something as hard to be granted, *viz.* the infallibility of the Church of *Rome*. But I shall here engage in no controversy of that nature. Both Protestants and Papists are, generally speaking, agreed, that the Books of *Moses* and the Prophets in the Old Testament, and the Writings of the Evangelists and the Apostles in the New are of Divine Authority; and if this be so, the Christian Religion must be true, whether there be, or be not others of the same nature, and of equal authority. These Books in the main have already been proved to be genuine, and without any material corruption or alteration. I shall now only propose such general considerations, as may be sufficient to obviate objections.

The agreement between the *Jews* and *Samaritans* in the *Pentateuch*, is a clear evidence for its Authority. And tho there were many and great Idolatries committed in the Kingdom of *Judah*, yet by the good providence of God there never was such a total Apostacy in the people, nor so long a succession of Idolatrous Kings, as that the Books, either of the Law or the Prophets, can be supposed to have been suppressed or altered. *For three years* under *Rehoboam*, they walked in the way of *David* and *Solomon*, 2 Chron. 11. 17. 12. 1, and tho afterwards he forsook the Law of the Lord, and all *Israel* with him, his Reign was in all but seven-  
teen

teen years. *Abijam* was a wicked King, but he reigned no longer than three years, 1 *Kings* xv. 2. *Asa* the third from *Solomon*, and *Jehoshaphat* his Son, were great Reformers; and *Asa* reigned one and forty years, and *Jehoshaphat* five and twenty years, 2 *Chron.* xvi. 13. xx. 31. The two next Kings in succession did evil in the sight of the Lord, but their Reigns were short, *Jehoram* reigned eight years, and *Ahaziah* but one, 2 *Chron.* xxi. 20. xxii. 2. During the interval of six years under the usurpation of *Athaliah*, the people could not be greatly corrupted: for she was hateful to them, as *Jehoram* her husband had been before her, and they readily joyned with *Jehoiada* in slaying her, and in restoring the worship of God, 2 *Chron.* xxii. *Joash* the son of *Ahaziah* did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of *Jehoiada*, 2 *Chron.* xxiv. 2. We are sure that he reigned well three and twenty years, 2 *Kings* xii. 6. and probably much longer, for *Jehoiada* lived to a very great age, 2 *Chron.* xxiv. 15. *Amaziah* his son has the same character, and with the same abatement, that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart, 2 *Chron.* xxv. 2. or yet not like *David* his Father: he did according to all things as *Joash* his Father did, 2 *Kings* xiv. 3. *Uzziah* son to *Amaziah* reigned well, and sought God in the days of *Zachariah*, 2 *Chron.* xxvi. 5. and after he was seized with the Leprosie for

invading the Priests office, the administration of affairs was in the hands of his Son *Jotham*, vers. 21. who imitated the good part of his fathers Reign, Chap. xxvii. 2. *Ahaz* was wicked and an Idolater, but he reigned only sixteen years, Chap. xxviii. 1. and his son *Hezekiah* wrought a great Reformation, who reigned twenty nine years, Chap. xxix. 1. *Manasses* was much given to Idolatry in the former part of his Reign, but after his captivity in *Babylon* he was very zealous against it, Chap. xxxiii. 15, 16. *Amon* imitated the ill part of his Father's Reign, but his own continued no longer than two years, Chap. xxxiii. 21. The next was *Josiah*, in whose time the Book of the Law was found in the Temple, which must be the Book of *Moses's* own hand-writing; for it is evident, that a Book of the Law could be no such rare thing at that time in *Jerusalem*, as to be taken so much notice of, unless it had been that Book, which was laid up in the side of the Ark, and was to be transcribed by every King. It seems, that Book of the Law had been purposely hid, to preserve it from the attempts of Idolaters, who it was feared might have a design to destroy it; for if it had only lain by neglected, the finding of it could have been no such surprising thing, because the place in the Temple was well known, where it was wont to be kept in the side of the Ark, and where they might have sought for it; but it was probably

bly at that time supposed to have been utterly lost, and its being found in the Ruines of the Temple, which was built for the observation of it, and where it ought to have been kept with the greatest care, as a most inestimable treasure; the veneration which *Josiah* had for so sacred a Writing, and the happy and unexpected recovery of it, when it had been disregarded and almost lost, through the iniquity of his Predecessors; these considerations could not but exceedingly move a mind so tender and affectionately pious as that Kings, when he received the Law under *Moses's* own hand, sent him, as he believed by God himself, and delivered to him, as it were, anew from Heaven. Not long after his time was the Captivity in *Babylon*; till which there were always Prophets; frequent Reformati-  
ons, and never any succession of Idolatrous Kings, which continued for a long time together; very few Kings were Idolatrous throughout their whole Reigns, and those that were, reigned but a short time.

\* It has been proved, that the *Pentateuch* \* Book 1. Part 2. c. 6. & 9. and the Books of the Prophets, written before the Captivity were preserved amongst the *Jews* till their return, and it is acknowledg'd by those who are of another opinion, that *Ezra*, who composed the Canon, did it by a Prophetick spirit, or had the assistance of Prophets in the doing it. \* *Josephus* says, that \* Joseph. Cont. A- pion. lib. 1. their Books after the time of *Artaxerxes* are not

not of equal authority with those before his time, for want of a certain succession of Prophets. And since the *Jews* admitted no writings as inspired, into the Canon after *Malachi's* Prophecy, this shews their sincerity and exactness in examining the truth and authority of such Writings, as they admitted into their Canon of Scripture. The Pharisees made the commandment of God of no effect by their Traditions, but never durst presume to impose them under the notion and character of a Book of the Scriptures. The modern *Jews* in like manner never dared to pretend to new Books of Revelation, but have constantly adhered to the old.

And what inducement could the *Jews* have to receive these Books into their Canon, of which it consists, rather than the Apocryphal Books, but the evidence of their Divine Authority? which is a thing more especially remarkable in some Books. Why should they receive certain Books under the Names of *Salomon*, *Esther*, *Daniel* and *Ezra*, but not admit into the Canon others going under the same names, but because of the difference in their Authority? Why should they receive the Books of those whom their fore-fathers had slain, and those very Books for which they slew them, but upon the clearest evidence? It is certain they could be posselt with no prejudice in their favour, but with very many against the Books of such Authors. To give another instance; The Book of *Ruth* contains

tains the affairs and transactions of a particular Family, of no great consequence, as one might imagine at first view, and yet it has been preserved with as much care, and as constantly received as the rest. There is little reason, upon human considerations, why a relation concerning that Family should be inserted into the Canon of Scripture, rather than one concerning any other. But the lineage of the Messias is set forth in it, and that was a sufficient reason why it should be inserted; and therefore by the Divine Wisdom and Providence, neither the emulation and envy of other Families, nor any other cause or accident hindred its reception and preservation amongst the other inspired Books. And in that History there is an account not very honourable for *David's* Family, in deriving his descent from *Phares* of *Thamar*, and shewing that his Great Grandmother was a *Moabite*; the *Moabites* being a people, who had an indelible mark of infamy fixt upon them by the Law of *Moses*, *Deutr.* xxiii. 3.

II. As the Pentateuch was ever acknowledged by the People of *Israel* after their separation from the Tribe *Judah*; so if they rejected the writings of the Prophets, it must have been because all or most of them were written by Prophets, who were of the two Tribes, and all the Prophets of *Israel* owning the Temple of *Jerusalem* to be the true place of Worship, the *Israelites* and *Samaritans* must have great prejudices against them upon that



that account, and it cannot be expected, that they should receive the Books of any of the Prophets in the same manner as they did those of *Moses*. The Books of *Samuel*, *David* and *Solomon* had less regard paid to them upon Reasons of State by the Tribes, who followed the Revolt of *Jeroboam*: yet when \* *Joseph Scaliger* sent to the *Samaritans* for the Canticles of the Book of *Psalms* in their Language; as well as for the Book of the Law and of *Joshua*, they promised to send him them. And it is proved sufficiently by Dr † *Lightfoot*, that neither the *Samaritans*, nor the *Sadducees* rejected the Books of the Old Testament, tho they did not admit the rest into the same veneration and authority with the Books of *Moses*; nor read them in their Synagogues. This is also proved by F. *Simon* \* both of the *Sadducees* and the *Karai*, and † *Morinus* likewise proves it of the *Karai*, who are generally taken for *Sadducees*; F. *Simon* maintains the contrary, and that they have wrong done them in being charged with the opinions of the *Sadducees*: However, this is not material to our present purpose, since he shews that both the *Sadducees* and the *Karai*, or *Caraites*, and all the *Jews* besides received the entire Volume of the Scriptures without any contradiction.\* *Hacksplan* likewise has shewed that the *Sadducees* denied not the Authority of the Books of the Prophets.

III Concerning the Books, whereof we we find mention made in the Old Testament, either

\* Antiqu.  
Orient.  
Ecccl. E-  
pist. 1.

† Hebr. &  
Talmud  
exercit.  
on Joh. iv.  
25.

\* Crit.  
Hist. V. T.  
lib. 1. c.  
16. & 29.  
Disquilit.  
Crit. c. 12.  
† Epist. 70.  
inter An-  
tiqu Ecccl.  
Orient.

‡ Prefat.  
de Lip-  
manno.

either 1. They are not different from those, which are now in the Canon, but the same Books under divers Names. Or 2. They were not written by Inspiration, tho written by Prophets. For we are not to suppose, that the Prophets were inspired in every thing, that they wrote, any more than in all they spoke. And this shews the care and integrity of the Jews in compiling their Canon, that they would not take into it all the Writings even of the Prophets themselves, but only such as they knew to be written by them, as Prophets, that is, by Inspiration, the Prophets themselves no doubt making a distinction (as we find St Paul did) between what they had written by the Spirit of God, and that in which they had not his immediate and extraordinary direction, and infallible assistance. Or 3. They might not be written by Prophets. For the office of Recorder, or Remembrancer, or Writer of Chronicles (as it is explained in the Margin) is mentioned as an office of great Honour and Trust, and was distinct from that of the Prophets, 2 Sam. viii. 16. 2 Kings xviii. 18. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8. Isaiah xxxvi. 3, 22. Besides, the Hebrews called every small Writing a Book: Thus Dent. xxiv. 1. that which we render a Bill of Divorcement is in the Original a Book of Divorcement, the word being the same, which, Job. x. 13. and 2 Sam. i. 18. is translated the Book of Jasher. So Matt. xix. 7. and Mark x. 4. it is in the

Greek

*Greek* a *Book* of Divorcement, the word is the same which the *Septuagint* had used ; it indeed may signifie a little Book, but it often signifies a *Book*, without that distinction, and so it is rendered 2 *Tim.* iv. 13. *David's Letter to Joab* is a *Book* in the *Hebrew* and in the *Greek*, 2 *Sam.* xi. 14, 15. and Lettets are stiled Books by

\* Herod.  
lib. 1. c.  
124. & lib.  
6. c. 4.

\* *Herodotus*. Or 4. Tho it should be granted that some Books, which were written by Inspiration, are now lost, it is no absurdity to suppose that God should suffer Writings to be lost, thro the fault and negligence of men, which were dictated by his Spirit. Several things might by the Prophets be delivered by Revelation to the persons whom they concerned, which were never committed to writing ; and others, which were written, but which were not necessary to the ends of Revelation in general, but rather concerned particular times and places, and the substance whereof, as far as the world in general is concerned, is to be found in the other Scriptures, might by the carelessness of men never come to the light and knowledge of Posterity.

And here I shall observe, that the Books of Prophecy have always the Names of the Authors exprest, and commonly they are often repeated in the Books themselves, but in the Historical Books there was not the same reason for it ; because in matters of fact, which are past, an Author may easily be disproved,  
if

if he relates what is false of his own times, or of times whereof there are memorials still extant. But the Credit of Prophecies concerning things to come, a long time after, to pass, must depend upon the Mission and Authority of the Prophet only, and therefore it was necessary that the Names of the Prophets should be annexed, that their Predictions might be depended upon, when they were known to be delivered by men, who by other Predictions already fulfilled, had proved themselves to be true Prophets.

IV. The very preservation of Books of so great Antiquity, thro so many changes and revolutions, against all the injuries of Time and Ignorance, against the violence of War and the malice of Adversaries, and so many other Accidents, which have destroyed most other Books of any considerable Antiquity, is a certain indication of a wonderful Providence concerned for them, and of that evidence whereby they were at first attested. The Laws of the wisest Law-givers of the most flourishing and powerful Nations have been so little regarded by the people to whom they were given, that they soon forsook the practice of them, and readily delivered up themselves to be governed by other Laws, upon any Revolution; and all the pretences to Revelation, which most of the Ancient Law-givers assumed to themselves, could make them no longer adhered to, nor so much valued, as to outlive  
the

the fate of the particular Kingdoms and States for which they were contrived ; but most of them were changed or laid aside before, and the rest given up and abandoned, as out of date, and of little use or esteem afterwards, and all of them were so little able to withstand the destruction of time, that we know not much more of them, than that the best and most ancient were in great measure taken out of the Laws of *Moses*. But the Books of *Moses* and the Prophets have continued entire and unchanged under all accidents and revolutions of affairs, bearing this character as well as others of him, who is immutable ; they have been still asserted against all the malice and opposition of Enemies by a captived and dispersed people, who by the signal providence of God, tho they reject their *Messias*, yet still acknowledge those prophecies, which foretold his coming, and after their dispersion for so many hundred years, are so far from renouncing them, that they assert and maintain them, and are zealous even to superstition, for those Books, which command that worship, and appoint those Solemnities, which they have so long been out of all possibility to observe, as if those Laws, which were once so uneasy to their Fore-fathers, were now become natural to their Posterity, or rather because they were revealed by him, whose word shall never pass away till all be fulfilled.

*of the Christian Religion.*

111

V. The New Testament gives evidence and confirmation to the Books of the Old, which are so often cited in it.

VI. The Christians were religiously cautious and circumspect in admitting Books into the Canon of the New Testament. The \* Epistle to the *Hebrews*, and the second Epistle of St *Peter*, were at first scrupled only, or chiefly upon the account of the style; the style of the former being thought different from that of St *Paul*, and the Style of the latter from that of St *Peter*. The Epistle of St *Jude* was likewise doubted of for this reason, because the Apocryphal Book of *Enoch* is cited in it. Writings, which went under the names of several of the Apostles were rejected, and by general consent laid aside. The genuine Epistle of St *Barnabas*, who is stiled an Apostle, *Acts* xiii. 2. xiv. 14. was never received but as Apocryphal; and the First Epistle of St *Clement*, of whom St *Paul* gives as high a character, *Phil.* iv. 3. as he doth of St *Luke*, or as St *Peter* ever gave of St *Mark*, was never admitted among the Canonical Books, tho it was wont to be read in Churches. But the Gospel according to St *Mark*, and the Gospel and Acts of the Apostles written by St *Luke*, have ever been received for canonical. For which no reason can be given, but that St *Mark* and St *Luke* were known to have written by inspiration, since upon all personal and humane Accounts, an Epistle of St  
Bar-

\* Hieron.  
Catalog.  
Eccl.  
Script.



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† Unam ad edificationem Ecclesie pertinentem Epistolam composuit, quae inter Apocryphas scripturas legitur. Id. ib.

*Barnabas* or *St Clement*, must have carried as much Authority with it, as any thing under the name of *St Mark*, or *St Luke*. † *St Jerom* says, that *St Barnabas* was the Author of one Epistle written for the edification of the Church, which is read among the Apocryphal Books; so that Books were styled *Apocryphal*, not because it was uncertain who were the Authors of them, but because it was doubtful whether they were written by inspiration or no. So careful was the Primitive Church to receive none into the Canon, but Books certainly inspired.

\* *Crit. Hist.*  
of the N.  
T. Part. 1.  
c. 1.

It is well observed \* by *F. Simon*, to this purpose, that if we compare the Gospels and the other Books of the New Testament with the Liturgies, that we have under the names of several Apostles, to whom the most part of the Eastern Christians do attribute them, we shall be convinced that the Gospels are truly the Apostles. For all the Churches have preserved them in their Ancient Purity; whereas every particular Nation hath added to their Liturgies, and hath taken the liberty often to revise them. The respect that hath been always had to the Writings of the New Testament, without inserting any considerable additions therein, is an evident proof that all people have looked upon them as Divine Books, which it is not lawful for any to alter. On the contrary, they have been persuaded, that the Liturgies, tho they bear the Names of the Apostles, or of some Disciples of Jesus Christ,

were

were not originally written by them, to whom they were attributed. And therefore it hath been left free to the Churches to add to them, or to diminish from them, according as occasion requires.

VII. As the Primitive Christians were very jealous and cautious in admitting Books into the Canon, so they had sufficient means and opportunities to examine and distinguish the genuine and inspired Writings from the Apocryphal or spurious. The way of Writing, and the hands of the Apostles were well known to those to whom they wrote, as St Paul intimates of his own hand and manner of Salutation : for when he used an Amanuensis, yet he wrote the Salutation with his own Hand, as his token in every Epistle, 2 Thess. iii. 17. They generally wrote to whole Churches, but particular men are frequently named in their Epistles, which was a great means to ascertain the Authority of them.

\* *Tertullian* appeals to Authentick Books or the very Hand-writings of the Apostles themselves. For tho it be acknowledged, that the word *Authenticus* doth not always denote the Original Writing under the Authors own Hand, but sometimes only the Original Language ; yet the words of *Tertullian* are express, that the Original Epistles were in his times still extant : for which

\* *Age jam, qui vult curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis tue, percurre Ecclesias Apostolicas, apud quas ipse adhuc Cathedra Apostolorum suis locis presidentur, apud quas ipse Authentice Literæ eorum recitantur. Tertull. de Præscript. c. 36.*

Reason he refers the Hereticks to the Apostolical Churches, where they were read, viz. to the Church of *Corinth*, of *Phillippi*, *Thessalonica*, *Ephesus*, and *Rome*; but the Epistles of the Apostles were read in *Greek*, without doubt, in other Churches besides these, and the Reason why he refers them to the Apostolical Churches rather than to any other, must be because the Originals under *St Paul's* own Hands were there still to be seen, and he mentions that the Thrones or Seats of the Apostles were then also preserved, as † *Eusebius* says, that of *St James* was preserved to his time.

† *Euseb.*  
Hist. lib.  
vii. c. 19.  
\* *Apol.* 2.

*Justin* \* *Martyr* ascribes the Gospels to the Apostles, he transcribes the Christian Doctrine at large out of them, and declares that they were read in the Christian Assemblies every Sunday. † *St Irenæus*, a Disciple of *St Polycarp*, who was made by Bishop *St John*, gives a particular account of the Writings of the Four Evangelists, and says there were Four Gospels and no more, and that these were written by *St Matthew*, and *St Mark*, and *St Luke*, and *St John*.

† *Irenæ.*  
lib. 3 c. 2.

\* *Tertull.*  
adv. *Marcion.* lib.  
iv. c. 2, 5.

\* *Tertullian* undertook the Defence of the Four Gospels against *Marcion*. And these Fathers frequently quote these and the other Writings of the Apostles; so do likewise *Clemens Romanus* and *Ignatius*, who lived and conversed with the Apostles themselves. But in our Disputes with Infidels particular regard is to be had to the History of the Gospel, for our Proof against them depends upon matter of Fact.

Both

Both \* *Grotius* and F. *Simon* have proved that the Gospel written in *Hebrew* by St *Matthew* was preserved to the time of St *Jerom* and *Epiphanius*, and that tho the *Nazarens* had made some additions to it, yet they had made no Alterations in the Original Text. F. *Simon* moreover says, that the Gospel of St *Matthew* had been translated undoubtedly out of *Hebrew* into *Greek*, before the *Nazarens* had inserted their Additions, these being to be found in no *Greek* Copy. The *Ebionites* had corrupted the *Hebrew* Copy, which they used, and had left out what they pleased; but the Copy of the *Nazarens*, *Epiphanius*

\* Grot. in  
Mat. F.  
Sim. Crit.  
Hist. on the  
N. T. c. 7, 8:

us † says was more entire, only he is not certain whether they retained the Genealogy of Christ; but it is most probable in F. *Simon's* judgment, that they did retain it, tho the *Ebionites* omitted it. So that, tho there were some Additions made by the *Nazarens*, yet as far as the proof of our Religion against Infidels is concerned, the *Hebrew* Gospel, in its Original *Hebrew*, as it was written by St *Matthew*, remained exactly perfect for divers ages. Till the Sect of the *Nazarens* ceasing, and the *Hebrew* Tongue growing out of use, the *Greek* Translation only was preserved. This Translation of St *Matthew's* Gospel is ascribed to one of the Apostles or Evangelists; tho it be

† ἔχει δὲ τὸ κατὰ Ματθαίου  
εὐαγγέλιον πληρέστατον Ἑβραϊ-  
στὶ παραφρασεὶς καὶ σαφὲς τὸ κατὰ  
τὸ ἀρχαῖον Ἑβραϊστὶ γράμ-  
μασιν ὅτι σφραγίσθη ἐν οἷς δὲ τὸ  
ἐν ταῖς γρηγορίαις τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ  
Ἀβραάμ ἔχει χειρὸς πεινῶτος  
Epiphan. Hæres. 29. Num. 9.

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\* Euseb.  
Hist. lib.  
iii. c. 39.

not certain to whom of them it belongs. \**Papias* speaks of the times before there was any Authentick Version, when he says that every one translated it, as he could, for his own use. It appears from him however, that there were *Greek* Versions of the Gospel of *St Matthew* made immediately upon its first publication; and from hence we may be assured that *St John* revised and approved the present Version (which is by some attributed to him), by whomsoever it was made at first. For this Gospel in the *Greek* Tongue being most in use, and thereby preserved, when the Original *Hebrew* has been so long ago lost, it is not to be supposed that *St John* should have no regard to it in that Review which he took of the other Gospels, that were written originally in *Greek*. We read in † *Photius*, that he revised the Gospels which were brought to him written in divers Languages, the Versions as well as the Originals, and therefore this of *St Matthew's* Gospel cannot be supposed to have been omitted.

† Phot.  
cod. ccliv.

One of the Miraculous Gifts was that of *Discerning of Spirits*, whereby persons endued with it were enabled to distinguish true Revelations from Impostures, 1 *Cor.* xii. 10. And *St John* wrote his Gospel and his Epistles to confute those Hereticks, who were the chief Forgers of counterfeit Books of Scripture, or the most notorious corrupters of the true Books: and his Life was by the Providence of  
God

God prolonged, that he might be able both to vindicate and perfect the Canon of Scripture. We find that † he discovered an Impo-  
 † Hier Catal. in St Luc.

sture, which was framed concerning St Paul, and \* that he read and approved the Gospels which had been written before his own; and there is no reason to doubt, but he had seen all the other Writings of the New Testament, and so finished the Canon of Scripture himself. And the

\* Τῶν περὶ τὰς ἐκκλησίαν τεσσάρων εὐ-  
 αγγελίων ἡς πάντας ἤδν, καὶ εἰς  
 αὐτὸν διαδεδομένων, ἀποδεχόμε-  
 νον πάντων, ἀληθινὰς αὐτοῖς ἐπι-  
 μαρτυρήσαντα, Euseb. Hist. lib. iii.  
 c. 24. — quod quum legisset  
 Matthæi, Marci, & Lucæ volumina,  
 probaverit quidem Textum  
 Historiæ, & vera eos dixisse fir-  
 maverit Hieron. Catal. in St. Joan.

Scriptures of the New Testament were read in the Churches and Assemblies of Christians from the beginning, as those of the Old Testament had been in the Synagogues of the Jews, by which means they became so divulged and published, that they could be neither lost nor falsified.

VIII. The Books of the New Testament were acknowledged to be genuine by the Adversaries of the Christian Religion. To say nothing of St Paul's Epistles, which he frequently quotes, the Gospels were allowed by Julian \* the Apostate to belong to the Au-  
 \* Cyrill. Al. x. contr. Jul. lib. x. † Trypho  
 thors, whose names they bear. † Trypho-  
 owns he had read the Gospels, and makes no  
 question or scruples about the Authors. Cel-  
 sus quotes the Scriptures frequently, and Hie-  
 rocles, (as \* Lactantius, who had heard him  
 \* Lactant. Institut. lib. v. c. 2, 3.  
 discourse, says) was as conversant in them, as



if he had once been a Christian, yet neither of them moved any dispute, concerning the Authors of the Books of the Scriptures, but in referring to them upon all occasions, shewed that they had nothing to object on that Head. And when † *Celsus* says, that some of the Christians made alterations in the Gospels, this is a confession that some only did it, and *Origen* shews that they were Hereticks, viz. the *Marcionists* and *Valentinians*, and perhaps the Disciples of *Lucanus* or *Lucianus*, for in this he could not be positive, tho this *Lucanus* was a follower of *Marcion*.

IX. There are still extant Copies of great Antiquity. The *Cambridge Copy* in *Greek* and *Latin*, containing the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles; and that which is supposed to be the second part of it, containing *St Paul's Epistles*, in the *French Kings Library*, and another the like Copy, which is in the Library of the *Benedictines* of *St Gerde* *Re De mains* \* are concluded to be a thousand years old at least: *Morinus* thought them to be ancienter than *St Jerom's* time. The *Alexandrian Copy* is believed to have been written by *Thecla*, above one thousand three hundred years ago. *Morinus* † acknowledgeth it to be of above twelve hundred years date. *Bishop Walton* supposes the *Alexandrian MS.* to be at least as old as that in the *Vatican*, which is allowed to be twelve hundred years old. There is † one *Syriack MS.* of the Gospels in the

† F. Simon, Crit. Hist. of the N. Test.

Part 1. c. 31. Mabil.

de Re Diplom. lib.

3. Tabell.

† Epist.

54. inter Antiqu.

Eccl. O. vident.

† Prolegom. ix.

34. † F. Simon.

Crit. Hist. of the N. T.

part. 2. c.

the Library of the Duke of *Florence*, of above a thousand years Antiquity, and another not much less ancient. A † *Gothick* Translation of the Four Evangelists in the Abbey of *Werdin*, is likewise of above a thousand years Antiquity. And what ancient Books are there, of which the Originals are still extant? or of which there are so ancient Copies, as of the Scriptures?

\* Gruter.  
Inscript.  
p. 146.

to M. Sufficient reasons may be given, to shew how it came to pass, that the Authority of some Books was at first doubted of.

1. The Epistle to the *Hebrews* had no name prefixt, (either because the *Jews* were prejudiced against St *Paul*, or because the *Gentiles* were his more peculiar care, or for some other reason unknown) and in this it differs from the rest of St *Paul*'s Epistles, and the † style is different, which occasioned the first doubts about it (as it happend likewise to St *Peter*'s second Epistle upon the account of its style) and then the *Novatians* alledging some Texts in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* in favour of their opinion, this made the Orthodox the less inclined to receive a Book, which before had been disputed, and therefore tho it was received in the East, it was questioned at *Rome*, where *Novatian* begun his Schisms. The second Epistle of St *Peter* might be scrupled on the same account, and both that and the *Revelation* of St *John* being alledged for the *Millennium*, by such as understood it in a

† Hieron.  
Catal. i.  
Petr. &  
Paul.

gross sense, this caused the Authority of those Books to be called in question, which is said  
 \* expressly of the *Revelation*.

\* Euseb.  
 Hist. lib.  
 vi. c. 25.

2. Some Epistles were written to particular persons, or directed to such as lived at a great distance, and by reason of Persecutions arising, the Authentick Epistles might not readily be produced.

3. Some Books were not usually read in the Churches, as the rest were: All the Books of Scripture, except the *Revelation* of St *John*, are inserted in the Catalogue of the Council of *Laodicea*, and this was omitted, because by reason of the abstruse Mysteries contained in it, it was not publickly read in Churches: for that Catalogue was designed to shew what Books ought to be read in the publick Assemblies. But the *Revelation* was long before acknowledged to be genuine by † *Justin Martyr*, by *Irenaeus*, and by *Tertullian*, and others: both *Justin Martyr* and *Irenaeus* wrote a comment upon the *Revelation* of St *John*. The Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Epistle of St *James*, and the second Epistle of St *Peter*, are cited by † *Clement Romanus*, in his first Epistle, which was itself wont to be read in Churches.

† Justin.  
 Marr.  
 Dialog.  
 Tertull.  
 de Resur.  
 c. 27, 38.  
 Adv.  
 Marcion.  
 lib. ii. c.  
 5. iii. c. 14.  
 Euseb. Hist. lib. iv. c. 18. v. c. 8. Hierom. Catal. in Jo-  
 hannum.

4. The Hereticks would use all their endeavours and subtilty to hinder the reception of

of those Books, by which their Heresies were disproved, and they might so far have effect, as to make some doubt for a while of their Authority. For instance, *Diotrephes*, an ambitious aspiring man, who prated against St John with malicious words, and had so much power, as to cast the Brethren out of the Church, would forbid the receiving of St John's Epistles, as well as the receiving the Brethren of that Apostles Communion; and that he did this, St John himself intimates, when he says, *I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the Pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not*, Joh. Epist. iii. 9. that is, he received not St John's Epistle, for that would have been to receive him as an Apostle, or to acknowledge his Authority.

XI. Tho the Authority of some Books hath been questioned by private men, yet those Books were never rejected by any Council of the Church, tho frequent Councils were called in the first Ages of Christianity, and had this very thing under consideration, \* *Tertullian*, after he had turned *Montanist*, rejecting the authority of *Hermas's Pastor*, as not being received into the Canon of Scripture, says, that it was reckoned amongst the Apocryphal Books by all the Councils of his Adversaries, the Orthodox. From whence it is evident, that in *Tertullian's* time divers Councils had past their Censure upon the Apocryphal Books, and that the Canon of

\* Tertull.  
de Pudi-  
cit. c. 19.

Scri-



the Apostles times, and delivered in these Canons what they had received from the Apostles. Dr *Beveridge* thinks they † were collected into one Body by *Clement Alexandrinus*, and Dr *Cave* seemed inclined to be of the same judgment. As to the Authority of the particular Apostolical Canon, which contains the Canon of Scripture, of the Council of *Laodicea*, gives a sufficient Testimony to it, so far as it concerns the Books of the New Testament; and shews wherein it has been corrupted since. All which very well agrees with that which I observed from *Tertullian*, that frequent Councils were called in the first Ages, and that they had the Canon of Scripture among other things under consideration, which we find set down in the last of the Apostles Canons, and from thence, in the Canons of the Council of *Laodicea*; no Book being omitted but the *Revelation* of St *John*, which yet had been acknowledged and received as Authentick from the beginning of those who had most reason to know of what Authority it was; but none were inserted into the Canon, but such Books as were appointed to be constantly read in the Assemblies of Christians. It appears then that the Canon of Scripture was finished by St *John*, and that such Books as were not of Divine Authority were rejected, by Councils held, when there were living Witnesses to certify St *John's* Approbation of the Canon, or at least those, who had received it from such Witnesses; the Gospels of  
the

\* Bever.  
Annot. ad  
Pandect.  
Can. &  
Cod. Can.  
Eccl. Pri-  
mit. vind.  
Cave Hi-  
stor. Liter  
in clem.  
Roman.



the other Evangelists were translated into divers Languages in St John's Life time, and we must in reason suppose the same of the other Books of Scripture; this is certain that they were all very early translated into many Tongues, and disperied into so many Hands, in so many Countries, that it was impossible they should be either lost or falsified, especially since the several sects of Christians were never more jealous and watchful over each other in any thing than in this particular, the several Interests and Pretensions of all parties being chiefly concerned in it, and no Catalogue of Books could have been received exclusively to all others, but upon the clearest evidence.

XII. When it once appeared, that the Books, which had been doubted of, belonged to the Canon of Scripture, they were afterwards generally acknowledged, and constantly received in all Churches: every Sect has since used all Arts and Endeavours to reconcile the Scriptures to their own Doctrines; few or none presuming to reject the Authority of any of these Books, which they would never scruple to do, if they suppos'd they could make out any plausible pretence for it. Protestants have refused to admit of the Apocryphal Books, as inspired; but whoever have gone about to reject any part of the Canonical Scriptures, have been universally declared against for it: whereof no other reason can be given, but the Evidence, that is for the Authority of the

Canonical Books of Scripture, which is wanting for the Authority of the Apocryphal Books. Papists own the Authority of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, and of the fourteenth Chapter of that Epistle, which is directly against praying in an unknown Tongue; and they acknowledge the Epistle to the *Galatians* to be genuine, tho the second Chapter be so clearly against the pretensions of the Church of Rome. These Epistles indeed were never controverted: but the Epistle to the *Hebrews* likewise is not rejected by the *Socinians*, the Divine Nature of Christ and the Merit and Satisfaction of his sufferings are so plainly asserted in it; and they dare not deny the Authority of the Gospel and Epistles of St *John*, tho they are so hard put to it, to expound them to their own sense, that *Socinus* was forc'd to pretend to I know not what Revelation to help out one of his explications, which he would not have done, if he could have found out any colour for not admitting the Authority of a Text, so directly contrary to his own Tenents, that he could not expect, that any thing less than a Revelation should procure any credit to his Interpretation. And generally the case is the same with other Sects: those that differ never much one from another in the Interpretation of particular Texts, yet agree in the acknowledgment of the Authority of the Canon of Scripture itself, or can find out no sufficient pretence to disown it.

C H A P.

## C H A P. V.

*Of the various Readings in the Old and New Testament.*

**I**T is to be observ'd, that an extraordinary Providence has in a great measure secur'd the Holy Scriptures from those Casualties which are incident to humane Writings. For the great Antiquity of many Books of the Scriptures, beyond that of any other Books in the World, the multitude of Copies, which have been taken in all Ages and Nations, the difficulty to avoid mistakes in transcribing Books, in a Language which has so many of its Letters and of its Words themselves so like one another, the defect of the *Hebrew* Vowels, and the late invention (as it is generally now acknowledged) of the Points, the change of the *Samaritan*, or ancient *Hebrew* for the present *Hebrew* Character, the captivity of the whole Nation of the *Jews* for seventy years, and the mixtures and changes, which were during that time, brought into their Language; in short, all the accidents which have ever happened to occasion errors or mistakes in any Book, have concurred to cause them in the Old Testament; and yet the different Readings are much fewer, and make much

much less alteration in the sense, than those of any other Book of the same bigness, and of any Note and Antiquity, if all the Copies should be carefully examined, and every little variation as punctually set down, as those of the Scriptures have been. But tho' from hence it may appear, that a peculiar providence has been concerned in the preservation of the Books of the Scriptures, yet from humane considerations and arguments, we may likewise be assured, that nothing prejudicial to the Authority of the Scriptures has happened by any of these means.

1. The defect in the *Hebrew* Vowels, and the late Invention of the Points is no prejudice to the Authority of the Bible, as we now have it. Tho' the Points, which critically determine the exact Reading of the *Hebrew* Tongue, be of a later invention, yet that Tongue was never without its Vowels. For *Aleph*, *Yau*, and *Jod*, and (which some add) *He* and *Gnajm*, before the invention of the Points, were used as Vowels, as it is evidently proved from *Josephus*, Vid. Walton. Prolegom. iii. f. 49. *Origen*, and *St Jerom*, by the best Criticks in that Language. It must indeed be confessed, that these Vowels could not be so effectual to ascertain the true Reading, as the Points have since been, but whatever defect there might be in the Vowels, it was supplied by constant use and practice, and by some general Rules, which they observed in the

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the Reading. The Bible being a Book which by Divine Commandment was so often and carefully read both in publick and private, the *Hebrew* Text might be exactly read, and the true sense certainly retain'd and known; and it is no wonder, that by constant use and continual practice and custom from their infancy, the *Jews* could read it with ease and readiness without Points, which is no more than is ordinarily done now by men, who are skilful in that Language, and divers have attain'd to it by their own observation and industry. If there were the more difficulty in the *Hebrew* Tongue before the invention of Points, there was the more care and study used about it, the *Jews* having times purposely set apart, for the reading of the Law, studied it with that diligence and exactness, that they knew it as well as they did their own Names, or better. \* *Josephus* expresses it, if that were possible; and they used so great accuracy both in their Pronouncing and Writing, that there could be no danger, that any considerable mistake should be occasioned by any defect in the Vowels, before the Points were found out. *This was a great part of the Jewish Learning, (as † Bishop Walton observes) the true Reading of the Text, and they who were most accurate and exact therein, were honoured most amongst 'em, and had their Schools, and their Scholars and Disciples, whom they instructed from time to time, till at length*

\* *Joseph.*  
*contr. Ap.*  
*lib. ii.*

† *Considerat.*  
*considerat.*  
*c. x. S. 3.*

length in regard of their many dispersions and banishments, that the true reading might not be lost with the Language, they began to affix Points to the Text, as well to facilitate the reading, as to preserve it the better from any alteration or change.

But this is an objection, which never could have been made but in the Western parts of the world; for, in the East they commonly write yet without points, as the Jews likewise write the Western Languages, where they live, without points, in the Hebrew Character.

\* The Samaritans still have no points. And † the Children of the Turks, Arabians, and Persians, and generally of all the Mahometans, learn to read without them.

\* Isaac Vossius says the Asiatics laugh at the Europeans, because they cannot read as they do without Vowels. † Schickard confesses, that he had known Children of seven years of age, read the Pentateuch meely by use.

\* Clenard, and Erpenius himself, who was so famous for the Arabick, and other Eastern Languages, both of them declared, that they learned the Arabick only by their own study and diligence from Books without points: and Arpenius had attained to such accuracy in that Language, before he had read any Book with the points, that Isaac Casaubon so far approved of the Translation which he had then made, of the Arabick Nubian Geography into Latin, that he was very earnest with him to publish it.

\* Walt.  
Prole-  
gom iii. f.  
40. Moritt.  
Epist. 19.  
& 70. in  
ter Anti-  
quit. Eccl.  
Orient.  
† Joseph.  
Scalig. E-  
pist. 243.  
\* Voss. de  
Sibyll.  
Orac.  
† Walt.  
Prole-  
gom. iii.  
f. 50.  
\* Lud.  
Capel. de  
Punct.  
Hebr. An-  
tiqu. lib.  
ii. c. 27. f.  
4, 5, 6.



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*dovicus Capellus* besides gives an instance from his own knowledge of one, who when he had scarce been taught the *Arabick* Alphabet, made a great progress in that Tongue in four months, only by his own industry, and without the help of points.

All these things considered, it would be a strange Paradox to pretend, that there is no certainty in the Ancient Eastern way of writing, and that no body can certainly know what their Authors meant, nay, that they did not know one anothers meaning, as well as we do now in our manner of writing, before some certain time, when the points are supposed to be first found out.

II. The change of the Old *Hebrew* Character into that now in use, is no prejudice to the Authority of the *Hebrew* Text. Because this was but the writing over that, which was before in one Alphabet into another, the Language being still the same: and this, if it were done with sufficient care (as we have all the reason in the world to believe it was) could make no material mistakes, and we find it hath not, by the agreement between the *Hebrew* and the *Samaritan Pentateuch* still extant.

III. The *Keri* and the *Kelib*, or the difference in some places between the Text and the Marginal Reading, is no prejudice to the Authority of the Scripture. For as the various Lectons of the Bible are much fewer,  
con-

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considering the Antiquity of it, and the vast numbers of Copies, which have been transcribed in all Ages and Countreys, than those of any other Book : so many of them may be easily reconciled, and the occasion of them as easily discovered. Some of them were occasioned by the likeness of several of the *Hebrew* Letters, which were not easily to be distinguished in Books written in such small Characters, \* as St *Jerome* complains were used in writing the *Hebrew* Bibles of his time. Others happen'd from Abbreviations, and some might proceed from Marginal Glosses.

\* Hieron.  
Proem.  
in Ezech.  
Comment  
lib. 8.

It must likewise be observ'd, that all the words we meet with in the Margin of the *Hebrew* Bibles, are not to be look'd upon as various Lections, for divers of them were placed there by the *Jews* out of superstition, because they scrupled to pronounce certain words, and therefore appointed others to be read in their stead. But when the *Jews* were dispersed into divers Countreys, their Dialect or manner of Pronunciation must needs be different, and as the same words were pronounced differently, so they would in time be differently written, which gave one chief occasion to the various Lections in the old Testament, for from the emulation between the Schools of the *Jews* at *Babylon* and those at *Jerusalem*, there arose a set of various Lections under the Title of the *Eastern* and the *Western* Readings, but † it is acknowledged, that they † are of no mo-

† Vid.  
Walt.  
Proleg. 8.  
ment, S. 28.

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ment, and that as to the sense, it is much at one which reading is admitted, for they concern matters of Orthography, rather than of Orthodoxy, as *Buxtorf* speaks; and the *Jews* of *Palestine* and of *Europe*, who follow the Western Readings, yet do not altogether reject the Eastern; but in some editions have printed them both. \* The different readings of *Ben Ascher* and *Ben Naphtali* had the same original, the Eastern *Jews* following the one, and the Western observing the other, but these concern the Points and Accents only, and not either the Words or Letters.

\* Id. Pro-  
leg. iv. f.  
9.

There is no Antient Book in the World, of which we can be certain, that we rightly understand it, if it be necessary to the right understanding of a Book, that it be without various Lectons; for what Book is there, without 'em, or what Book of the same bigness, and of any Antiquity, has so few various Lectons as the Bible? and what Book can be Transcribed or Printed, but it is liable to have mistakes made in it.

IV. No difference between the *Hebrew* Text and the *Septuagint*, and other Versions, or, between the several Versions themselves, is any prejudice to the Authority of the Scriptures, nor can prove that the *Hebrew* Text was ever different in any thing material from what it is now. The Translation of the *Septuagint* \*, as it hath been observed from *St Jerom*, and others, is in many places rather a Comment or Paraphrase than a strict Version, and gives the sense

\* Id. Pro-  
legom.  
ix. f. 12.  
& x. f. 8.

sense rather than the words of the *Hebrew* Texts. Many times there is supposed to be a difference, where there is none, for want of a sufficient knowledge of the Original, as † Dr Pocock has shewn in divers Instances, and Bp † Pocock Append. ad Port. Mos. c. 1, 2, 3, 4. Pearson in others, besides what has been written by *Isaac Vossius* to this purpose: and one very skilful in the Oriental Tongues, had Pearf. Præf. ad Septuag. Edit. Cantab. If. Voss. de lxx. Interpret. Walt. Proleg. ix. 46. undertaken to shew the agreement between *Hebrew* and the *Septuagint* throughout, and had made a considerable Progress in the work, as Bishop *Walton* informs us. Other differences proceed from the mistakes of Transcribers, as it must needs happen in Books, of which so many Copies have been taken in all Ages; and from the rashness of Criticks in making unnecessary alterations, or by inserting into the Text such Notes, as were at first placed only for explication in the Margin. In some things of less consequence the Translators might be mistaken, or they might follow a different Copy.

The Authority of the Text of Scripture is greatly confirmed from the citations of the *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers, from whence it appears that in the several Ages of the *Greek* and *Latin* Churches, the Copies which they made use of had no such variations from those we now use, as to be of any ill consequence in matters of Religion.

As to the Imputation that was charged upon the *Jews* by some of the Fathers, that

they had corrupted the Scriptures in such places, as according to the Translation of the Septuagint, and the sense of their Ancestors must prove the Truth of the Christian Religion against them ; this is to be understood of the Versions of *Aquila*, *Symmachus*, and *Theodosian*, who being all either profess *Jews*, or Judaizing Hereticks, designed their Translations to countenance their own errors, especially *Aquila*, who undertook his Version, purposely to oppose that of the Septuagint. For it is now generally agreed, that the *Jews* never deserved the Censure of having corrupted the *Hebrew* Text, tho they perverted the sense of it, and where there were various Readings, chose to follow that which was most favourable to their own pretences, tho it were in contradiction to the Judgment of their Forefathers, as well as the Christians. *Philo* in a discourse cited \* by *Eusebius* (who thereby owns the Truth of it) said, that for the space of above two thousand years there had not been a word altered in the Law, but that the *Jews* would chuse to dye never so many deaths rather than they would consent to any thing in prejudice of it. And † *Josephus* declares of the whole Old Testament, that it had suffered no alteration from the beginning down to his own Time. \* *Morinus* himself, whatever he hath elsewhere said to the contrary, declares in a Letter to Dr *Comber* Dean of *Carlisle*, that he supposes no man can doubt, but that the

*Jewish*

\* Euseb.  
Præpar.  
Evang.  
lib. viii.  
c. 6.

† Contra  
Apion.  
lib. i.

\* Antiqu.  
Eccl. Ori-  
ent. Epist.  
38.

*Jewish* Copies, *ceteris paribus*, are to be preferred before any Copies of the *Samaritans*, which he in his Writings so highly magnifies.

It must be acknowledged that the numbring of the Verses and Words and Letters, and the observing which was the middle Letter of every Book, could signify little to the securing of the *Hebrew* Text entire, because there may be the same number of Verses, and Words, and Letters in different Books, and the same Number of Letters may make up different Words, and the same Words diversely placed and apply'd, may express a very different sense: nor could there be any charm in a word, that stood in the midst of a Book, to keep all the rest in their proper places. But this scrupulous and even superstitious diligence of the *Jews*, in little things is an evidence of their constant study of the Scriptures, and of the great value and reverence they had for it, so that they would neither corrupt it themselves, nor suffer it to be corrupted by others, but were careful and zealous to preserve every ever letter and tittle; and as I observed before from *Josephus*, they were so well acquainted with it, that he thought he could not fully enough express their skill and accuracy, but by saying that they knew it better than their own names.

V. It is evident, and confess by the Critics, that neither by these; nor by any other means, any such difference is to be found in the several Copies of the Bible, as to prejudice



the fundamental Points of Religion, or weaken the Authority of the Scriptures. All relating to this controversy has been eagerly debated by contending parties, who yet agree in this, whatever they differed in besides, that the various Lections do not invalidate the authority of the Scriptures, nor render them ineffectual to the end and design of a Divine Revelation, inasmuch as all the various Lections taken together, are no prejudice to the Analogy of Faith, nor to any Points necessary to

Salvation. \* *Ludovicus Cappel*, who had studied this subject as much as any man, and was as well able to judge of it, after the strictest examination he could make, found, that the things relating either to Faith or Practice, are plainly contained in all Copies, whatever difference there is in lesser things, as in matters of

\* Non minus ex ijs, quæ supra disputata sunt, planum est, id, quod statim libri primi initio monuimus, & sæpius toto opere inculcavimus, plerasq; omnes, quæ observari & deprehendi in sacris libris possunt, varias Lectiones, levissimi esse ac pene nullius momenti, ut parum admodum intersit, aut vero perinde omnino sit, utram sequaris, sive hanc, sive illam. *Ludovic. Cappel. Crit. Sacr. lib. 6. c. 2.*

Chronology, which depend upon the alteration, or the omission or addition of a Letter, or in the Names of Men, or of Cities or Countreys. But the fundamental Doctrines of Religion are so dispersed throughout the Scriptures, that they could receive no damage nor alteration, unless the whole Scriptures should have been changed, Wherefore not only the most learned Prote-  
facts,

stants, but † *Bellarmin* himself, and the best Criticks amongst the Papists have acknowledged, that all things relating to Articles of Faith, and Rules of Life, are delivered intire and uncorrupted in the Scriptures, notwithstanding the various Lections. And

tho some of the *Roman* Communion have endeavoured to prove the necessity of an infallible Church, by Arguments drawn from hence, yet says \* *Bishop Walton*, I do not re-  
*member, that in any particular controversy be-*  
*tween them and us, they urge any one place of*

*Scripture, for their cause, upon the uncertainty of the Reading without Points, which plainly shews, that there is no such uncertainty in the Text un-*  
*pointed, as is pretended.* F. † *Simon* complains, that

the Catalogues of various Lections are much larger than they ought to be, and that for the most part they are of no moment, and he charges *Cappellus* more than once, with multiplying 'em without Reason. *Morinus* indeed made it his endeavour to lessen the authority of the *Hebrew* Text in favour of the *Septuagint*, and the *Vulgar Latin*, but his Authority is very inconsiderable, when compared with those of the same Communion, who have declared themselves against his opinion. In \* the life

of *Morinus*, written by F. *Simon*, there is this Character of *Cappellus* and *Morinus*, that if  
they

† *Cæterum non tanti momenti sunt ejusmodi errores, ut in iis, quæ ad fidem & bonos mores pertinent, Scripturæ Sacræ integritas desideretur. Plerumq; enim tota discrepantis variarum Lectionum in Dictionibus quibusdam posita est, quæ sensum aut parum, aut nihil mutant. Bellarmin. De Verbo Dei lib. ii. c. 2.*

\* *Considerator consideratus, ch. 12. f. 4.*

† *Hist. Crit. V. T. lib. 3. c. 23.*

\* *Joh. Morin. Vita.*

† Epist.  
70. inter  
Antiqu.  
Eccl. O-  
rient.

they be compared as to what they have both written concerning the Bible, *Morinus* shews more learning in his Books, but it is very often not to the purpose, whereas *Cappellus* has more sagacity and judgment, and never wanders from his subject, but proves what he is upon by the strongest Arguments. And as severe as this Censure may seem to be, yet it is justified in effect, by the confession of *Morinus* himself. For he † acknowledgeth to *Buxtorf* that he never thoroughly applied himself to the study of the *Hebrew* Tongue, that he had read nothing in *Hebrew* for 7 years together, and that therefore he did not question, but he had made many mistakes, especially in his *Samaritan* Exercitations, great part of which were written in haste, and he was forc'd to use such a variety of Authors, that he believes it impossible, but that he must have been often mistaken. The Authority of *Morinus* then signifies nothing in prejudice to the *Hebrew* Text. And \* *Spinoza* himself has owned, that he could for certain affirm, that he had observed no fault nor various reading, which concerned the Moral Precepts, that cou'd render them obscure or doubtful.

\* Hoc  
certo af-  
firmare  
possum  
menul-  
lam ani-  
madver-  
tisse men-

dam, nec Lectionum varietatem, circa moralia documenta, quæ ipsa obscura aut dubia reddere possunt. Tractat. Theolog. Polit. c. 9.

† Crit.  
Hist. V.  
T. lib. 3.  
c. 21.

*Bishop Walton* has with great learning and judgment, summed up the Arguments on all sides, and as † *F. Simon* acknowledgeth, has

ex-

examined this matter with more exactness than all that had gone before him. His Polyglot Bibles give an ocular demonstration to the truth of what he maintains, that there is nothing of consequence, either as to Faith or Practice, concerned in the difference of the several Copies of the *Hebrew* Text, or of the several Versions. And as many Sects and Divisions as there are amongst Christians, and as many different Translations as they make use of, they all acknowledge the Authority of the originals, and their Translations in the main are the same, however they disagree in rendering some particular passages, which concern the different opinions of the several parties, and upon that account maintain their own Translation to be more correct than others. If we allow of Mr \* Selden's Judgment, who was very able to make a true one, <sup>Table-  
Talk.</sup> and far enough from being prejudiced in the case, he says, *the English Translation of the Bible is the best Translation in the world, and renders the sense of the Original best, taking in for the English Translation the Bishop's Bible, as well as King James's.* However, by different Translations, and by comparing divers Copies and Versions to make out the true Reading, many Texts become better understood, and more fully explained, than if there had been but one Reading, and no difference in the Translations.

VI. And no less may be said in behalf of the New Testament than of the Old ; for the Books of it were kept from the beginning as a Sacred Treasure, with great care and reverence, and were constantly read in the Christian Assemblies, and soon translated into all Languages. The Primitive Christians chose to undergo any Torments, rather than they would deliver up the Books of Scripture to their Persecutors to be destroyed, and they were no less careful to preserve them uncorrupted by Hereticks. Besides, when Hereticks attempted to corrupt any Text of Scripture to serve their particular Heresies, they were declared against not only by the Orthodox, but by other Hereticks, who were not concerned for those opinions, in behalf whereof the corruption was intended. So that it was impossible for any corruptions to be imposed upon the Church, or to pass undiscovered even by some of the Hereticks themselves. They must be designed for some end, and to authorize some particular Doctrines, and then all, who were not for those Doctrines, and more especially those who were against them, would certainly oppose such corruptions.

The agreement likewise of the *Greek* Text of the New Testament, with the several ancient Versions, and with the quotations found in the Writings of the Fathers, who cited and alledged them from the times of the Apostles, proves that there have been no alterations

ons of any such consequence as to make the Scriptures insufficient for the ends of a Divine Revelation. If any man be of another opinion, let him instance in any one Article of Faith, or Rule of Life, which cannot be proved from the Scriptures. It is not enough for him to shew, that some one or more Texts, which have been brought in proof of it, are disputed, but he must shew that it can be proved by no Text, which is clear and undisputed.

The various Lectons of the Holy Scriptures are so far from being an Argument against their Authority, that they rather help to prove it, since they are comparatively so few in a Book of so great Antiquity. For no care and regard, inferiour to that, which we must suppose men to have of a Book, which they are convinced is of Divine Authority, could have produced a less variety of Readings in a Book of much less Antiquity. They are all of no consequence to the prejudice of the end and design of a Revelation; and therefore they come under the number of such Accidents, as God cannot be obliged in his providence to prevent. But the Bible could not without the signal providence of God, have been preserved for so many ages, under so many changes and revolutions, which the Wisdom of God, for reasons elsewhere observed, saw fit to permit, much less could it have escaped with so inconsiderable variations,



ons, unless it has been secured by a particular providence, from those corruptions and alterations, which are so frequent in Humane Writings.

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## CHAP. VI.

### *Of the difficulties in Chronology, in the Holy Scriptures.*

**C**hronology is the part of Learning, which is most nice and difficult to be exactly adjusted, because it depends upon so many several Circumstances, and comprehends so great a variety of affairs in all Ages and Nations, and how punctually soever the accounts of time be set down at first, yet the least alterations in one word or letter may cause a great difference in Copies, and the difference of *Epoches* in the computations of different Countreys, especially at great distances of time as well as place, is such, that the exactest Chronology may easily be mistaken, and may be further entangled and perplexed by those, who endeavour to rectify what they think amiss, for that which was exact at first is often made faulty by him, who thought it so before. But I suppose, that no material exception will lye against the Scripture upon the account of any difficulties in Chronology, if those two things

things be made out. I. That differences in Chronology do not infer uncertainty in the matters of fact themselves. II. That differences in Chronology do not imply, that there was any Chronological mistake made by the Penmen of the Holy Scriptures; but that they have been occasioned by the mistakes of Transcribers or of Expositors.

I. Differences in Chronology do not infer uncertainty in the matters of fact themselves. Because the point of time is but one circumstance, and that easily mistaken by a thousand accidents, and there may be many other circumstances so particular, and so well attested, as to give sufficient evidence to the truth of things related, notwithstanding any uncertainty in the circumstance of Time. For which reason \* *Plutarch* did not reject the Relation of a discourse that past between *Solon* and *Creon*, tho he could not answer the objections brought from Chronology to prove it feign'd, because he found it delivered by good Authors, and saw nothing improbable in it, but every thing very likely and suitable to *Solon's* temper; and he thought it unreasonable to reject a matter of fact, which had no other objection against it, but some difficulties in Chronology; when, says he, innumerable persons have endeavour'd to rectify the Chronological Canons, but could never be able to this day to reconcile the differing opinions. The uncertainty of Chronology is a general complaint

plaint made by the best Historians, and therefore if this objection have any weight, it must invalidate the Authority of all History.

A very learned and accurate Author has shewn the uncertainty in Chronology † during the first Monarchy, both in respect of Kingdoms, viz. *the Kingdom of Assyria itself, and the Kingdoms contemporary with it, and of Persons and Occurrences.* But doth this prove that there never were any such Kingdoms, nor any such Persons and Occurrences? It is uncertain when the City of *Rome* was first built;

for \* *Salust* and others, contrary to the common opinion, that it was founded by *Romulus*, have ascribed the foundation of it to the

*Trojans*. And † those who make *Romulus* the Founder, yet are at a strange disagreement concerning the Parents of *Romulus*, and the time of his Birth. Some have called his Mothers name *Ilia*, some *Rhea*, some *Silvia*, others, as *Livy*, *Rhea Silvia*; yet still there is a further difference about the time of the foundation of the City, which has occasioned great disputes among Chronologers. What then must follow from hence? Why, if the uncertainty of the time when any Fact was done, imply the uncertainty of the Fact itself, we must fairly conclude, that it is uncertain whether

*Rome* was ever built at all, or at least we must, with \* *Temporarius* believe, that there never was any such man as *Romulus*. The

Copies

† *McMillner's Defence of A. Bishop Usher.*

\* *Salust. Bell. Catalan.*

† *Plutarch. in Romulo.*

\* *Temporarius Chron. Demonstr. lib. iii.*

Copies of *Diogenes Laertius* place the Time of *Epicurus's* Death 9 years before he was born, as *Menagius* has observed; but the enemies of Religion have too great a value for *Epicurus*, to give him up for that Reason, and to conclude that there never was such a man. But it is yet more strange that the time of so late and so remarkable a thing as the taking of *Constantinople* by the *Turks* should be placed by some a year sooner than by others. This was an Action known and discoursed of throughout all *Europe*, and is a pregnant Instance how little Reason there is to dispute the certainty of a Thing from any uncertainty of Time, if other Circumstances concur to assure us of the Truth of it. *The Chronologers* are not a little ashamed, says Mr Gregory, that they should not be able to satisfy us, concerning so late and famous a calamity as the Siege of *Constantinople* by *Mahumed the Second*.

\* Menag.  
observ. in  
Diog. La-  
ert.

Jo. Greg.  
de Eris &  
Epochis.  
c. 3.

THE differences in Chronology do not imply, that there was any Chronological mistake made by the Pen-men of the Holy Scriptures, but they arise from the mistakes of Transcribers or Expositors. To be convinced of this we need only reflect a little upon some of those things, which are apt to cause mistakes in the Computations of Chronology; and it will soon appear, how unreasonable it is to imagine, that no Book can be of Divine Inspiration, which is not fitted to secure men from

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the errors, which it is natural for them to commit in things of that intricacy.

I. Many difficulties in Chronology are occasioned by not observing, that that which had been said before in the general is afterwards resumed and delivered in the particulars contained under it. For the total sum of any term of years being set down first, before the particulars have been insisted upon and explained, has led some into mistakes, by supposing, that the particulars afterwards mentioned were not to be comprehended in it, but to be reckoned apart, as if they had happened afterwards in order of Time, because they are last related in the course of the History. Thus *Gen. xi. 26.* it is said that *Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram*; and *vers. 32.* that *the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.* But *Gen. xii. 4.* it is written that *Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran*: which is inconsistent, if we suppose that *Abram* lived in *Haran* till the Death of his Father *Terah*: but if we consider that the whole number of years which *Terah* lived is set down *Gen. xi. 32.* and that the departure of *Abram* out of *Haran*, which is related *Gen. xii.* yet happened before his Fathers Death, there will be no inconsistency; but it will be evident, if *Terah* was but seventy years old when *Abram* was begotten, and *Abram* was but seventy five years old when he went out of

of *Haran*, that *Abram* left his Father *Terah* in *Haran*, where he lived after *Abram*'s departure from him to the age of two hundred and five years. Tho during his Father's life he did upon occasion return to *Haran*. For the final removal of *Abram* was not till the death of his Father, as we learn from *Acts* vii. 4. And if this way of relating that in General first, which is afterwards set forth in the Particulars, be attended to in the Interpretation of the Scriptures, it will afford a Solution of many difficulties; as \* *St Austin* has observed, which otherwise are inexplicable. Others suppose *Abram* was the youngest of *Terah*'s Sons, tho<sup>as</sup> mentioned first, and then there is no difficulty in the Chronology; only by this and other instances we may observe that the eldest Brother is not always placed first in Scripture, but sometimes the youngest, out of respect to him, for his favour with God, and his greater dignity and worth: and therefore whatever difficulties in Chronology arise upon this supposition, that the Son first named must therefore necessarily be first born, proceed from a mistake.

2. Sometimes the principal number is set down, and the odd or lesser number is omitted, which being added to the great or principal number in some other place, causes a difference not to be reconciled, but by considering that it is customary in the best Authors

Aug.  
Qu. Sup:  
Genes. c.



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not always to mention the lesser numbers, where the matter doth not require it. And we have evident proof of this in the Scriptures. The time of the sojourning of the children of *Israel* in the land of *Canaan*, and of their dwelling in *Egypt* is said to be the space of four hundred years, *Gen. xv. 13. Acts vii. 6.* which yet was in all four hundred and thirty years, *Exod. xii. 40. Galat. iii. 17.* The *Israelites*, who came out of *Egypt*, are computed to be *six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty*, *Num. i. 46. ii. 32.* but *Moses* speaking of them, *Num. xi. 21.* leaves out the three thousand and five hundred and fifty. *Jerubbual* or *Gideon* is said to have had *threescore and ten* Sons by his Wives, besides *Abimelech*, whom he had by a Concubine, *Judg. viii. 30, 31.* and *Abimelech* is often said to have slain these threescore and ten brethren, tho *Jotham* the youngest of them is at the same time said to have escaped, *Judg. ix. 5, 18, 24, 56.* The *Benjamites* that were slain, *Judg. 20. 35.* are said to be *twenty and five thousand and an hundred men*, whereas *vers. 46.* they are reckoned only twenty and five thousand men. *1 Cor. xv. 5.* we read that our Saviour was *seen of Cephas, then of the twelve*, tho *St Matthias* was not chosen into the number of the Apostles till after the Ascension of Christ, and *St Mark* says precisely that *he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat*, *Mark xvi.*

xvi. 14. Thus in Heathen Authors the Tro-

jan \* Fleet is said to consist of a thousand Ships, whereas Homer makes them two hundred more, as † Thucydides reckons them, or one hundred sixty six, by his Scholi-

\* Si, inquam, Numerus non est ad amissim; ut non est, cum dicimus mille naves iisse ad Trojam, centumvirale esse judicium Romæ. Varro de Re Rust. lib. ii. c. 1.

† Thucyd. lib. i. c. 10.

asts counting, but the Historian did not care to be so punctual. The Judges stiled *Centum-*

*viri* amongst the Romans, were at first five more than an hundred, and afterwards \* al-

\* Plin. lib. vi. Epist.

most twice that number, yet still they re-

tained the same name, as the LXXII. Inter-

preters are commonly stiled the Septuagint.

Since therefore it is manifest, that the lesser

Number are sometimes omitted both in the

Old and New Testament, as well as in other

Authors, and the principal and greater num-

bers, whether more or less than the precise

Calculation, are only set down, and at other

times the lesser numbers are specified, it is rea-

sonable to make abatements for this in adjust-

ing the accounts of Chronology.

3. Sometimes an *Epocha* may be mistaken by

Chronologers: as Gen. vi. 3. And the Lord

said my Spirit shall not always strive with man: for that he also is flesh, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. But from Gen. v. 32. compared with Gen. viii. 13. the Flood must happen but an hundred years after these words seem to have been spoken: tho if we compute not from the time, when this was threatned,

† Hieron.  
Qu. in  
Genes.

but from the beginning of Man's Apostacy, which we may suppose then to have been already Twenty years, there will be no difficulty in it. Or else the Threatning, tho placed after it, might be denounced Twenty years before the Five hundredth year of *Noah's* Age, which falls under the observation above-mentioned of *St Austin*. † *St Jerom* indeed says that the time allowed mankind for Repentance was shortened for their Contumacy, and the Flood was brought upon the World twenty years sooner than was designed, if their Provocations had not hastned it,

4. Variations in Chronology may sometimes proceed from the likeness of two words, which occasioned the writing the one for the other. Thus *Acts* xiii. 20. some read, *ὡς ἦν τὸ τελευτῆσαι*, not *ὡς ἦν τὸ ἐλεγεῖσθαι*. Some famous Copies, from whence most others now remaining may have been transcribed, might happen to be uncorrect in some of these less material parts of Scripture: the Numeral Letters were easily mistaken, as we see our Figures now are; and when they numbred by Letters, mistakes might the oftner happen, because the Transcribers might unawares write down a Letter of the foregoing or following Word instead of the true Numeral Letter, when there was any likeness between them; and the *Hebrew* Letters being some of them so very much alike, might be a readier occasion of mistake. This change of Numeral Letters some think to have

occasioned the difficulty concerning the Age of *Ahaziah* son of *Jehoram* King of *Judah*, when he began to Reign, *2 Kings* viii. 26. *2 Chron.* xxii. 2. And that such mistakes have been made in Transcribing the Septuagint is evident, because the several Copies of that Version have different accounts of Chronology, and they also differ from the Copies made use of by *Africanus* and *Eusebius*. Mistakes of this kind are very \* common in all

*Greek* and *Latin* Authors, and to prevent this inconvenience, Mr *Greaves* acquaints us, that the Emperour *Ulug Beg*, Nephew to *Tamerlane* the Great, † in his Astronomical Tables (the most accurate of any in the East) has expressed the numbers of the principal Epochas, first in Words, at length and again in Figures, and then a third time in particular Tables: whose example this excellent

Author alledgeth for his own exactness in describing the dimensions of the Pyramids after the same manner; supposing it very improbable, if any one of these Accounts should happen to be altered, that two of them should not agree, and that those two which agree, shall not express the true number.

5. In some places the Alterations, which  
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cause

\* Error fortasse ex notis ortus—nusquam non isto modo in bonis utriusq; Linguæ Scriptoribus est peccatum. Casaub. ad Theoph. Charact. Proem. Sed non dubito Librorum potius negligentia, presertim tot jam seculis intercedentibus veritatem fuisse corruptam, quam ut Propheta erraverit. Sicut in hoc ipso nostro opusculo futurum credimus, ut describentium incuria, quæ non incuriose a nobis sunt digesta, vitientur. Sulpic. Sever. Hist. Sacr. lib. 1. c. 70.

† Greaves Pyramidogr.

\* Vid.  
Ludovic.  
Capell.  
Chron.  
Sac.

cause the differences in the Chronology of the Septuagint from that of the *Hebrew* Text are so uniform, that they could not be made but by design of some Transcribers, or of the Translators themselves. For instance, in the Lives of the five first Patriarchs, and of *Enoch* the \* seventh they, add an hundred years before their having children, and deduct the same number of years from the time they lived afterwards: which is conjectured to have been done, because they supposed that by years there, are to be understood Lunar years or months, and so they altered the Chronological account of their Lives. For if those be the years meant by the *Hebrew* account, they must have been Fathers of children at 3, 6, 7, or 8 years of Age. Another conjecture is, that it might be supposed, that as Mens lives were longer then, so the Age at which they were capable of Marriage must not be the same that it is now, but must bear proportion to the length of their Lives, and therefore they altered the Chronology to make the Patriarchs fathers of children at such an Age, as might answer to the Age at which men are capable of having children in these latter times.

The mention of *Cainan*, the son of *Arphaxad*, both in the Version of the Septuagint and in the Gospel of St *Luke*, tho it be not in the *Hebrew*, is a matter of greater Difficulty. But Bishop \* *Walton* notwithstanding saw sufficient Reason to conclude however, with such

\* Prolegom. ix. f. 64. &c.

such caution and candor as became so great a Judgment, that the Septuagint followed the Hebrew Copies of those times : and the Answers to the Arguments brought to prove the contrary, have since been considerably enforced by the Learned † *Isaac Vossius*.

There is reason to believe that the Hebrew and the Samaritan Account were the same \* in St *Jerom's* time, and that the difference between them has happened since.

6. The Son often reigning with the Father, his Reign is sometimes put down as commencing from his Partnership with his Father in the Kingdom, and in other places from his Reigning alone after his Fathers decease. Thus the difficulties are explained concerning the beginning of the Reigns of *Jehoram* King of *Israel* Son of *Ahab*, and *Jehoram* King of *Judah* Son of *Jehosaphat*, 2 *Kings*. i. 17. iii. 1. For it is said expressly that *Jehosaphat* being then King of *Judah*, *Jehoram* the Son *Jehosaphat* King of *Judah* began to Reign, 2 *Kings* viii. 16. It is likewise manifest, that *Jehoash* the Son of *Jehoahaz* King of *Israel* must reign with his Father 3 years, 2 *Kings* xiii. 1, 10. This is also applyed in the explication of other Questions by St \* *Jerom*. The Reign of *Azariah* is computed from his taking the Government upon himself at sixteen years of Age in the 27th year of *Jeroboam* King of *Israel* ; for then he is said to begin to reign, 2 *Kings* xv. i. whereas his Father *Amaziah* lived but

† Castigar.  
ad Script.  
Georg.  
Horn. c.

† Siquidem & in  
Hebræis  
& Samaritanorum  
libris ita  
scriptum  
reperi. Et  
vixit Ma-  
thufala,  
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ron.

Quæst. in  
Gen. vid.  
& Capell.  
Chron.  
Sacr.

\* Hieron.  
ad vital.

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to the 15th year of *Jeroboam's* Reign, 2. *King.* xiv. 17. In the Kingdom of *Israel* there was a long Interregnum between *Jeroboam* the second and *Zachariah*, 2 *Kings* xiv. 23. xv. 8. Some assign a threefold computation of the years of *Nebuchadnezzar's* reign, the first from his laying Siege to *Jerusalem*, the second from his taking it, and the beginning of the captivity, the third from his entire Monarchy after the conquest of *Egypt*. Others assign two beginnings of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Reign, the one from his coming with his Army into *Syria*, during the Life of his Father, the other from his Father's death.

7. The Terms of Time in Computation are sometimes taken inclusively, and at other times exclusively, *Matt.* xvii. 1. we read, *After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his Brother, and bringeth them up into an high Mountain apart*; and in like manner, *Mark* ix. 2. But this is said *Luke* ix. 28. *to come to pass about an eight days after*; which is very consistent with what the other Evangelists write. For St *Matthew* and St *Mark* speak exclusively, reckoning the six days between the time of our Saviours discourse, which they there relate, and his Transfiguration; but St *Luke* includes the day in which he had that discourse with his Disciples, and the day of his Transfiguration, and reckons them with the six intermediate days. The *Rabbins* \* also observe, that the very first day of a year may stand

\* Lightf.  
Harm. of  
the N. T.  
S. ix.

stand in computation for that year: and by this way of reckoning, mistakes of years *current* for years *compleat*, or years *compleat* for years *current*, in the successions of so many Kings, and the Transactions of affairs for so long a time, may amount to a considerable number of years. For this reason † *Thucydides* says he computes the years of the *Peloponnesian War*, not by the Magistrates yearly chosen during that time, but by so many Summers and Winters.

† *Thucyd.* lib. v. c. 20.

These, and several other ways, by which Disputes in Chronology may be occasioned, are a sufficient Argument to us, that they do not imply, that there were originally Chronological Mistakes in the Books themselves. And if they might so many ways arise without any error in the Original Writings; if the same difficulties occur upon so very nice and intricate a subject in all Books in the World, and it could be by no means necessary, that Books of Divine Authority should be either at first so penned, as to be liable to no wrong Interpretations, or be ever after preserved by Miracle from all corruption, it is great rashness to deny the Divine Authority of the Scriptures upon the account of any difficulties in Chronology.

## C H A P. VII.

*Of the Obscurity of some Places in the Scriptures, particularly, of the Types and Prophecies.*

**H**ERE it must in the first place be remembered, that it has been a common and true observation, that all Authors are rather perplex'd and obscured, than explained by a multitude of Commentators; and this is so true of no Book as of the Scriptures: for as none has had so many Glosses and Comments put upon it by men of all Ages and Nations; so most of them endeavour to find out some new Explication, or to serve a Cause; and maintain some particular opinions by their Expositions. So that, it is a wonder that any part of the Scriptures should be clear, after Volumes have been written, I may truly say, upon every Text; rather than that difficulties should be found in them. But at the same time it must be acknowledged, that we find it declared in the Scriptures themselves, that there are places of difficulty in them: which makes it but so much the more unreasonable that this should be urged as an objection against them. For what is acknowledged and profess'd, must be suppos'd to be with a design, and

and for some good reason, and the reason and design ought to be inquired into, before this be used as an objection. St Peter speaking of Christ's coming to Judgment says, that St Paul in his Epistles had delivered *some things hard to be understood*; and St Paul himself intimates, that there had been mistakes concerning what he had written in this matter, 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2, 3. St Peter on this occasion says, that it so happened not only to St Paul's Epistles, but to other Books of the Scriptures, thro the ignorance and rashness of *unlearned* and *unstable men*, 2 Pet. iii. 16. And it happens more especially in those places of Scripture, which are concerning things of this nature, or contain whatever Prophecies of things to come. Therefore I shall, I. give an account how it comes to pass, that there are things hard to be understood in the Scriptures in general. II. I shall in particular consider the obscurity of Prophecies, and shall prove the certainty of the Types made use of by the Prophets, and shew that there is great force and evidence in the Arguments brought from them. III. I shall prove that the obscurity of some places of the Scriptures is no prejudice to the Authority of them, nor to the end and design of them.

I. I shall give an account in general, how it comes to pass, that there are some things in the Scriptures hard to be understood.

i. Some

1. Some Doctrines, which it mightily concerns us to be acquainted withal, could not be delivered in so plain a manner, but that they must needs have great difficulties in them, as the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, of the Incarnation of Christ, of the Resurrection, and of the Joys of Heaven and of the Torments of Hell. There are several things which we are capable of knowing, and which are necessary to be known, of which yet we cannot have so perfect and absolute a knowledge, but that something of them will still remain unknown to us. As there is no object more visible, or better known to us than the Sun is, but to calculate the dimensions and the distance of the Sun from us, to know how its light is communicated, and suddenly spread over the face of the Earth, are things of great difficulty, and can never perhaps be fully accounted for: In like manner, what the Scriptures deliver to us concerning the Nature of God, and the state of the World to come, must needs have difficulties in it, tho' we are never so well assured that there is a God and a future state; because these are things above our understandings; we may perfectly understand that there are such things, but can have no full and clear conception of all that may be fit to be delivered to us concerning them. Nothing can be made plainer to us, than we are capable of knowing it, or than the Nature of it, and the pro-

portion our Faculties bear to it, will allow. God being incomprehensible, whatever is delivered concerning him, can never be without all difficulty, and whilst we are in this world, we can never understand the state of the next so fully, as we shall do hereafter. And these are difficulties which must be, unless the Nature of the things, or our own Nature were different from what it is.

Nevertheless, the greatest Mysteries in the Christian Religion, so far as they are revealed, and so far as they are required to be known by us, contain no inexplicable difficulties: but if we will needs know more of the Mysteries of Religion than is revealed, and more than is required to be known, no wonder if we meet with difficulties. What is meant, for instance, by the Doctrine of the Trinity, is capable of being very well understood, as the opposers of this Doctrine must own, unless they will confess, that they oppose they know not what. He that says a thing is not true, knows what it is which he pretends not to be true, if he understands what he says. The thing then is known, tho there be difficulties in the explication, but the explication concerns the manner of existence, not the truth of it. For that may certainly be, and we may certainly know it to be, which yet we know not how it should be. And the Doctrine itself only is revealed, as necessary to be believed, not any particular explication of it. And if it can be  
proved,



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proved, that this is the Doctrine of Scripture, and it be plain to be understood what is meant by this Doctrine, as it is delivered in Scripture, this shews the plainness of the Christian Religion in all things necessary to Salvation, tho divers things relating to this Doctrine be difficult to be explained, because the Doctrine is plainly enough and intelligibly delivered, so far as it is required to be understood and believed.

Several Arts and Sciences, which are very difficult and abstruse in the Theory, are easy in the Practice, and a man may very well understand what the *Theorem* itself is, which is to be proved, tho he be altogether incapable of understanding the proof of it. Now, what God says, is as certain as any demonstration can be, and what he has plainly delivered, is plain as well as certain; and it is never the less certain or plain, because we cannot make out the proof of it, nor are able to understand how it can be. It is sufficient that the Scriptures are plain in this Doctrine, so far as we are concerned to know it; it is not necessary that the Doctrine itself should be plain in all the controversies, which may be raised about it: when we know the meaning, we must take Gods word for the Truth of it. The manner of the distinction of Persons and the Unity of Essence in the Godhead is not required to be believed, but the Thing, and we know the Thing to be so, because God him-

himself has said it, tho we can know nothing of the manner of it. We know the Proposition, which is to be believed, tho we cannot make good the Proof of it in the way of natural Reasoning, but only from the Authority of the Revealer, which is of it self sufficient, and ought to be instead of all other Reasons to us.

2. Some parts of the Scriptures were fitted and accommodated to former Ages, and were more proper and useful for them, than if they had been written in such a manner, as to be less obscure and difficult. We may well imagine, that many parts of the Scriptures must have been more peculiarly adapted to their use and advantage, for whom they were immediately designed: and the Learning and Wisdom of ancient Times consisted in Parables and Proverbs and obscure Forms of Speech, in *Prophecies*, in *Subtil and Dark Parables*, and in *the secrets of grave Sentences*, *Eccl. xxxix. 1, 2, 3.* And it was foretold of the *Messias* in particular, that he should speak in Parables, as a matter of great excellency. *I will open my mouth in a Parable, I will utter dark sayings of old, Ps. lxxviii. 2. Matt. xiii. 35.* This was in Ancient Times the Language of Courts, and the properest way of Address to Kings. *Nathan* the Prophet, and the woman of *Tekoa* came to *David* with a Parable, *2 Sam. xii. 1. xiv. 4.* And *Jeboash* King of *Israel* sent a Message of the same nature to *Amaziah* King

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of

\* Feo-  
dot. lib. i.  
c. 141.

\* Joseph.  
Antiqu.  
lib. viii. c.  
2. &  
Contr.  
Apion.  
lib. i.

† Vid. A-  
thenæ. lib.  
xi. c. 15.  
&c.

\* Herod.  
& Plur.  
in Vit.  
Homer.

of *Judah*, 2 *Kings* xiv. 9. and *Cyrus* \* answers the petition of two Nations at once to him in a short Parable. To understand a Proverb, and the Interpretation, the words of the wise, and their dark sayings, was the best description that *Solomon* himself could give of Wisdom, *Prov.* i. 6. And \* *Solomon* and *Hiram* are related by *Josephus* to have propounded Problems and Riddles or Parables to each other, upon condition of a forfeiture to be paid by him who could not explain the Riddle sent him. This would be looked upon now as a strange correspondence between Kings; but then it was otherwise thought of; many of their Epistles were preserved, as he tells us, to his time at *Tyre*; and the Heathen Historians, whose Testimonies he produceth, thought it deserved their particular observation. This custom of propounding Riddles was as old as *Sampson's* time, *Judg.* xiv. 12. and examples of the same nature are to be seen in *Herodotus* † and other Authors. Whether it be true or false that *Homer* died of grief, because he could not explain the Riddle of the Fishers, it shews that Riddles were in great request amongst the Ancient *Greeks*: for otherwise there could have been no ground either for the Truth or Fiction of such a story. *Plutarch* relates it, as the true cause of *Homer's* death; and when † *Herodotus* denies this, he owns the Report; and by the Verses, which he says *Homer* spoke upon this occasion, it appears.

pears what opinion *Homer* had of this sort of Wit. *Hesiod* is by \* *Quintilian* thought the Author of the Fables, which pass under the name of *Æsop*; however, this makes it probable that he did write Fables, and perhaps there were few men of Learning and note in those times, who did not.

† *Quintil.*  
*Institut.*  
*lib. v. c.*  
*xi.*

Mythology was in the highest esteem amongst the Ancients, and indeed all the Ancient Learning was of this kind. The *Ægyptians*, who were in great Reputation for Learning, delivered their Notions in Hieroglyphicks, as if they had resolved not to be understood. And the Philosophers of old, *Pythagoras*, *Heracitus*, &c. greatly affected obscurity. *Socrates* himself, and *Plato* and *Aristotle* purposely concealed their meaning in many cases from vulgar capacities: and *Thucydides* took the same course in his History, and was obscure out of design, as *Marcellinus* has observed in his life. The Books of the Old Testament for the most part seem to have been the most plain, and the most easily intelligible of any Writings of ancient times; and they could not have been more obvious, but they must have been contemptible and useless to those for whom they were immediately designed. The precepts and exhortations are always plain and obvious, and the obscurity of other things is so far from being an exception to the Books of Scripture, that it was necessary according to the Learning and Customs of ancient times.

The Parables of our Blessed Saviour are explained to us, and there can now be no pretence of obscurity in them; and in his Discourses with the *Jews*, to whom they were not explained, he alluded to those Proverbs and Customs, which were best known and most in use among them, to whom upon any occasion he spoke; that thereby all, who *had ears to hear*, and were not by their sins hindred from attending to what they heard, might be the more affected with them, and the better inclined to give themselves up to his Instructions, when they heard him make use of such Allusions, as they knew, according to the way of teaching amongst them, had some excellent hidden meaning, which they would be very desirous to become acquainted withal.

3. Many places of Scripture, which are obscure to us, were not obscure in the ages in which they were written. (1.) Because the obscurity for the most part is rather in the form and manner of Speech, than in the notions themselves; so that that might be clear at first, which is obscure to us, who are but little acquainted with the Phrases and Idioms of the Language, and the Eloquence of those Times and Countries. For the Fashions of Speech vary as much as those of the Garb and Habit, and the Eloquence and ways of Expression are as different, as the Dialects and Languages of divers Ages and Nations. (2.) The names of Ani-

Animals, of Flowers and Plants and Minerals are very liable to be mistaken, and especially whatever is peculiar to any Country, must needs be difficult to be understood by Foreigners, who have no such things among them, and perhaps want words to express their Nature, and can scarce have a true and exact notion of them. The precise value of Coins, and proportion of Weights and Measures used so long ago, and in Countreys so far from ours, can hardly now be known and must necessarily admit of great variety of opinions: there is much uncertainty about these in all ancient History, but the great Antiquity of the Jewish History above others may make us reasonably expect to find many more such difficulties in it, and the different Names of the same Persons, and of the same Places in the Scriptures is another occasion of obscurity. The Names, Coins, Weights, and Measures, and Habits of ancient times afford the greatest work for Criticks, which were so well known, when the Authors who mention them, wrote, that it had been ridiculous for them to explain them. These are difficulties of that Nature, that they could not be avoided, but by the care and concernment of an extraordinary providence, and they are of so little moment, that it could not be expected, that God should particularly concern himself to prevent them.



(3.) The Penmen of the Scriptures, in their Proverbs or Parables, often allude to Customs, or to things, that happened in those times, in which they lived, that were then commonly known, but being unknown now, may well make many places of their Writings obscure to us, which were not so to those of their own time. This is alledged as the

\* Obscuritates inquit sex Cæsilius, non assignemus culpe Scribentium, sed inscitie non assequentium: quanquam hi quoque ipsi, qui quæ Scripta sunt, minus percipiunt, culpa vacant. Nam longa ætas verba atque mores veteres obliteravit, quibus verbis moribusque sententia legum comprehensa est. A. Gell. lib. xx. c. i.

reason of the obscurity \* of the Laws of the Twelve Tables among the Romans, at the distance of less than eleven hundred years after their first being enacted. And thus it is in all Books of Antiquity, especially in such Books as have frequent occasion to

hint at things so notorious at the time when they were written, that it was needless to give any particular account of them. This has made Notes and Comments necessary upon all Ancient Books, and those places need them most, which treat of things formerly so well known, that the Authors did not think fit to insist upon them, but supposed them, and only alluded to them, rather than express or explained them. For which reason we owe the Informations which we have of the Roman Antiquities chiefly to Greek Authors, because it had been absurd for Romans, writing to men of their own City and Nation, to acquaint them with the customs

stoms of *Rome*, which they knew as well as themselves ; but those things were proper for Foreigners to take notice of, for the information of Foreigners. And whatever Allusions, either in Parables or otherwise, are made to such things, must needs be difficult to us, because whatever is thus spoken with reference to any thing, can be known no better than the thing itself ; and that which served for an Illustration at the first Writing, renders the sense obscure, when the thing used for Illustration, becomes unknown. Nothing is more generally known than the proverbial Sayings of a Nation, to the people of it ; but there is nothing that needs more explication to Foreigners. And these Sayings are very frequent both in the discourses of our Saviour, and throughout the whole Scriptures: for they are the most significant and instructive way of Discourse, and the most easily apprehended by such as are used to them. The use of Proverbs is natural to all Nations, and they are the result of the experience and observation of any people : So that the most effectual and readiest way of Instruction is to apply these Sayings generally known and received, to particular cases and occasions. But then these commonly depend upon the customs of a people, or upon some History, or particular Accident, and oftentimes are taken up at first upon small occasions, and the intention and signification of them is apt to be forgotten,

or mistaken in future Age, or by other Nations. And therefore all places of Scripture, exprest in Allegorical or Proverbial Forms of Speech, or by Types and Resemblances of things, must needs have been better understood in those times, when they were written, than they are now, because we have but an imperfect Notion of many things, to which the Allusion is made, or from whence the similitude is taken, and the very thing which makes them now obscure to us, made them the more plain and intelligible to them, who lived at the time of their being written.

\* Maim.  
More Ne-  
voch.  
Præf.

(4.) *Maimonides* \* lays this down as a fundamental Rule of the explication of the Scripture, that we should attend to the main Scope any Design of Parables, and not insist upon every word and circumstance, which is added to make them more Natural, but not as any necessary part of them. And in those Ages, when Prophecies were so frequent, and Types and Allegories so constantly made use of, they had certain Rules and Methods † of Interpretation, as we learn from *Josephus*, which thro length of time and the corruption of succeeding Ages are now lost. And it is certain, that the *Jews* in the time of our Saviour and his Apostles were often confuted and silenced by them with the Application of Types and Prophecies, which were then acknowledged to belong to the

† Joseph.  
Bell. Jud.  
lib. iii. c.  
14.

*Mes-*

*Messias*, and were ever so understood by the *Jews*, but would scarce be understood so by us, if we did not find them thus interpreted and apply'd.

We see then, that the obscurity of many places of Scripture proceeds from the length of Time, and other accidents, and that therefore it could not be prevented, unless God should make a New Revelation to every Age and Nation of the World: which yet would be of little effect to those, who will not be convinced nor perswaded by that Revelation which we have in the Scriptures. Tho the Scriptures were designed for the Benefit and Instruction of all Ages and Nations, yet they often had a more direct and immediate Regard to the Age and Nation, in which they were first penned. We have nothing left but the Names of most of the Historians, mentioned by St *Jerom* as necessary to be read in order to explain the Prophecies of *Daniel*, and many objections made against the Scriptures would have no pretence, if we knew the circumstances of affairs, and had a compleat History of those times, to which they relate; but God having given us full evidence, that the Scriptures are written by his Appointment and Direction, expects to be believed upon his word, and has not thought fit to gratify the curiosity of men, who will disbelieve it. And if men will use any tolerable care and diligence, the Sense and Importance

portance of the Scriptures may be so far understood as is needful, in all Times, whatever difficulties there may be in some particular passages.

II. I shall consider more particularly the obscurity of Prophecies, and shall shew what certainty there is in the Types made use of by the Prophets.

I. As for any differences, which are to be met with in the Interpretation of Prophecies, they may proceed partly from the Infirmities and Passions of humane Nature, by which it comes to pass, that when men undertake to write upon any subject, they are seldom satisfied with what others have said before them, but are for seeking out some New Interpretation of their own. And partly from the difficulty of fixing the particular and precise time of Actions. But this is no more an objection against Prophecies, than it is against the Truth of all History; and we may as well conclude, that things never came to pass, because learned men differ about the time of their being done, as that they were never prophesied of, for the same reason. Expositors may differ in the niceties of the Chronological part, but in the main they are agreed, and whoever will be at the pains to consult them, may be greatly confirmed in the Truth of the Prophecies, upon this very consideration, that there is less difference in the explication of the Principal Prophecies, than there is in  
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the Comments upon most Histories ; and that those who differ in other matters, must have the greater evidence for that in which they do agree. Tho there be some difficulty and variety of opinion in the calculation of the precise time, when some Prophecies were fulfilled, because it is disputed where the computation is to begin, or how some other circumstance is to be understood ; yet all Expositors are agreed concerning these very Prophecies that they are fulfilled. For instance ; it is certain that the Scepter is departed from *Judab*, whether that Prophecy be to be understood of the Tribe of *Judab*, or the *Jewish* Nation denominated from that Tribe, it is certain, that the City and Sanctuary are destroyed, and the Sacrifice and Oblation taken away, tho Interpreters do not agree about the precise time and manner of the accomplishment of every particular. Plain matter of Fact shews that the Prophecy is fulfilled, and there is no difficulty but about a Circumstance ; and to doubt of the fulfilling of Prophecies, because we do not certainly know the exact time when every particular was fulfilled, tho we certainly know that they must have been all long since fulfilled, is as unreasonable as it a man should question the Truth of History upon the account of Uncertainties in Chronology. What man doubts whether there were such a man as *Homer*, because it is uncertain when he lived ? or whether there  
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ever were a *Trojan War*, because the time of the taking of *Troy* has been variously determined. And yet is there not as much reason to reject this, or any other History, which has occasioned disputes in point of time, as there can be to doubt of the truth of *Daniel's* Predictions, concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, because there may be matter of controversy in explaining his *seventy Weeks*. The Prophecy itself is plain, and the Accomplishments certain, however men may differ in assigning the *Epocha* of time. History relates what has come to pass, and Prophecy foretells what shall come, and our uncertainty in point of Time no more affects the Credibility of the one than of the other. We may be uncertain of the time foretold by the Prophet, and as uncertain of the time mentioned by the Historian, but when all other Circumstances agree, there is no reason why our uncertainty as to the single Circumstance of Time should be alledged against the Credibility of either of them. But the Obscurity arising from the difficulties in Chronology is spoken of in the former Chapter.

2. Some Prophecies were purposely obscure, because they did not so nearly concern the Ages in which they were delivered, but were designed not so much for the information of preceding Ages, as for the confirmation of Posterity in the Truth of Religion, when they see them fulfilled. God doth not  
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send Revelations to gratify the curiosity of men, in acquainting them with what shall befall their Posterity, but rather conceals the knowledge of future events from men, because the knowledge of them might have an ill effect, in making them proud, or careless and negligent ; or else too solicitous and concerned about what was to befall their Posterity. The Judgments and Afflictions of Parents would be so much abated if they had a clear prospect of the happiness of their Posterity, that they would lose that effect, which God designs by sending his Judgments. And a perfect view of the miseries, which were to befall the Posterity of the most happy Parents, would render the Blessings of God the less Blessings to them. So that both the Rewards and Punishments of this life would very much lose their force and effect, if Prophecies were less obscure than they are. It is a sufficient Reason for the obscure and mysterious delivering of some Prophecies, that they thereby serve to prove the Faith and Patience, and excite the Care and Watchfulness of men: for which reason, the day of Judgment, and the day of every man's Death is concealed from us, because the particular and distinct Revelation of these things would cause security in some and despair in others ; and the case is the same as to the destruction of Churches and Nations: We are commanded to  
watch

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watch and pray, *watch ye therefore, lest coming suddenly be find you sleeping, and what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch,* Mark xiii. 35. Which in the direct sense of the words concerns *Jerusalem*, but the reason of them will extend to the destruction of any other City, or to any other judgment which God has foretold, but has concealed the time or other circumstances, either by silence or by uncertain and mysterious forms of Speech. A full prospect of Prosperity to come oftentimes has proved fatal to men; *Jeroboam, Hazael, and Jehu*, were the worse probably for the Declarations made to them, as *Achithophel*, if it had been foretold plainly what would befall him, would in all likelihood sooner have hastened his own death. Whether therefore the event be good or bad, and whether it concern our selves or our Posterity, it is fit most times that it should not be clearly revealed to us, because this would in great measure exclude the exercise of the Graces of Faith and Hope, and Patience in men, under their present condition. And at the time of fulfilling the Prophecies, which are now most obscure, such a continued Train and Series of Affairs, with all their Circumstances and Particularities, may appear in so full and undeniable evidence, as may convince Infidels, and confirm Believers in the truth of the Predictions, and of the Religion taught by the Prophets, by whom the events were foretold.

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(3.) Obscurity was necessary in some Prophecies, at the \* Fathers observe, because without a constant Miracle to preserve them, they would otherwise have been lost, and would never have been delivered down to Posterity. Of this Nature are some of those Prophecies, which relates to our Saviour's state of Humiliation, his Poverty, and Crucifixion and Death, to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the rejection of the *Jews*, which by the Circumstances are manifest to us in the Accomplishment, but were written with some obscurity to conceal them from the obstinate and malicious *Jews*, that *seeing they might see and not perceive*: for if they had fully understood the scope and importance of them, they would have endeavoured rather to have suppressed and destroyed them, than they would have suffered them to remain to be urged against themselves. A People who were so wholly possessed with the Notion and Expectation of a Temporal *Messias*, would have rejected those Prophecies which set forth his Humiliation and Crucifixion, if they had been expressed in plainer terms. They would have spared Christ no more in the Prophecies of him than in his Person.

Again, Obscurity was necessary, because some events could never have been brought to pass, if they had been expressly and in plain

\* Euseb.  
Demonst.  
Evan. lib.  
vi. Pro.  
zm.  
Chryf. in  
Isai. c.vii.  
Theodo-  
ret. in E-  
zech.  
Præf.

plain terms foretold, unless God would have forced men to the Accomplishment of his Predictions, which must have taken away the Liberty of Human Actions. For men would scarce have ventured upon such Actions, as they knew before-hand must end in Affliction and great Calamity, and perhaps in the ruin of themselves, or of their Families or Nation; and yet it may be necessary, that these things should come to pass, for the wise ends of Providence, and for the Good and Salvation of Mankind. Few would have shewn that Courage and Resolution, which *St Peter* and *St Paul* did in preaching the Gospel, if they had been told so long before, as *St Peter* was, that it must end in Martyrdom, or if the Holy Ghost had witnessed in every City concerning them, as he did of *St Paul*, saying in express terms, that *bonds and afflictions did abide him*; most other men would have been moved, tho he was not, by *any of these things*, Acts xx. 23. For we find that the Disciples upon this account were earnest with him not to go up to *Jerusalem*. So difficult is it for the best men in the best cause to resolve to meet certain and apparent Dangers. The nature therefore of some things requires, that they should not be more particularly described in the Prophecies concerning them. For either they must have been obscurely spoken of, or else they could not have been prophesied of at all: because if they

they had been clearly foretold, they could never have come to pass ; which implies a contradiction : for it is impossible that what God declares by his Prophets should not be fulfilled. If all that was to befall the Church of Christ had been set down with the circumstances of time and place, and persons, by St *John* in the *Revelation*, so as to prevent the objections of those, who except against the obscurity of that Book, this certainly would have proved a great discouragement to many Christians in the performance of their Duty, and must have hindered the bringing to pass the events, unless God should have over-ruled the minds of men, and forced them upon acting, which had been to deprive them of their Freedom of Will.

4. If Prophecies had punctually foretold the things to be fulfilled in all their Circumstances, men would have purposely contrived to frame their actions in such a manner, as to appear to fulfill many of them, and whenever they had been fulfilled, it might have been supposed to have been by design and contrivance. Which would have been only to act a part, or live by a rule and pattern described and set before them ; but when the obscurity is such, that they become fulfilled without any Intention or Knowledge of the Person employed in fulfilling them, this manifests the wisdom and providence of God. If Prophecies had been less obscure, men would have been the more prone, to venture upon the commission of sin in order to fulfil them. We find by experience, how apt all Enthusiasts,



and such as persuade themselves that they have a clear and perfect knowledge of the obscurest Prophecies, are, to think any thing lawful to be done, which may bring about those events, that they fancy to be the Accomplishment of them. And if the events of all Prophecies had been concealed under no obscurity of words and circumstances, but had been obvious and visible to every Reader, the number of such undertakers would have been much greater: for it is a hard matter to make men distinguish between the accomplishment of Prophecies, and the sin which is often committed in the accomplishment of them; but when they can serve their interest by it, they are willing to believe the worst actions lawful, which may fulfil a Prophecy; and the clearer Prophecies had been, the more occasion and pretence had been given to such dilutions, to which none are now subject, but such as think them clear, and persuade themselves, or would persuade others, that they thoroughly understand them.

5. Another reason is, that sometimes a Prophecy may be delivered obscurely in mercy to the Instruments, who are to bring about the event foretold by it. For God foreseeing that some men, notwithstanding the clearest Revelations, would persist in their wickedness, and become instrumental in accomplishing the prediction may in mercy to them forbear to discover the particulars of the event, lest this should add to their guilt, and prove a great aggravation both of their crime and punishment.

Our Saviour, who he knew from the beginning who it was that should betray him, yet concealed it, till his last Supper, and then discovered it to Judas in the mildest manner, to move him to Repentance, if he had not hardened himself against it; not to make him desperate upon the discovery of so wicked a design.

Again, other Prophecies may be hid in obscurity for a judgment upon those who are obstinate, and will not make a due use of the means afforded them of Salvation, but harden their hearts, and resolve to continue impenitent against all the methods which God has been pleased to use to reclaim them. For of such our Saviour gives this reason, why he spoke to them in Parables, *that seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they might hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them,* Markiv. 12. For when God has both by Miracles and other Prophecies unquestionably clear and plain, admonish'd and forewarn'd 'em of the folly and danger of their ways, and they will take no notice of it, but reject his Revelations, and just affront his mercy, it is very for him to deny them that further Declaration and Manifestation of his Will and Power, which might effectually produce a true Faith in 'em, and bring 'em to Repentance, especially when the obscurity of Prophecies may be conducing to the methods of his Providence, and to his gracious designs of mercy towards other men, who have not stood out in so bold a de-

stance of his other Declarations of himself. God endureth with much long-suffering the effects of wrath fitted for destruction, he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardneth: and therefore the obscurity of Prophecies may be in mercy to some, to prevent the aggravation of their sins, and for a judgment upon others to harden them.

6. *It is the Glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of Kings is to search out a matter,* Prov. xxv. 2. The obscurity of Prophecies may be designed to abate the confidence, and confound the pride of some, and to provoke the diligence and industry of others. For as some men care to be at no pains to attain the most useful and necessary knowledge, so others despise all that is obvious, and have no satisfaction in the knowledge of such things, as are easily known by others as well as themselves.

And this seems not only to have been the temper of those Ages, in which the Scriptures were written, when Learning consisted in Types and Parables, and in dark and intricate discourses, but it has been the study and delight of learned men in most Ages since, and of many men in all Ages to search into hidden and difficult truths. St. Jerom extols the *Revelation* of St. John for the obscurity and hidden sense of it. In that Age, it seems, it was no objection, but the highest character that could be given of the *Revelation*, to say that it was difficult to be understood. The wisdom of God therefore in condescension to all

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\* Apocalypsis Joannis tot habeat sacramenta quot verba Parum dixi prae meritis voluminis, laus omnis inferior est in verbis singulis. Multiplis taceat intelligentie. Hieron. ad Paulin. Epist.

sorts of men, and to fit the Scriptures for the use and benefit of all capacities and dispositions, has caused some of the Prophecies to be plain and obvious to all Readers, and others to be delivered as to employ the pious and humble labours of the most Learned and Inquisitive, to keep them in perpetual dependance upon God for his Grace and Assistance in the explication of the Scriptures; and at the same time to take down the vain curiosity and pride of such, as little concern themselves about the plain things of the Law, but are wholly busied in unfolding hidden things, and in pretending to *understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge.* The curse denounced against man upon his fall was, that with labour and sweat he should eat the fruits of the ground, as his punishment, for having eaten the forbidden Fruit: and it was but just with God to punish the curiosity of man after forbidden knowledge, which occasioned his fall, with making the attainment of knowledge more difficult.

If the Scriptures were all obscure, they would be of little use, if they were all obvious, they would be despised. For if obscurity be made an objection by some, their plainness and simplicity is objected by others, but God has so ordered and proportioned the several parts of them, that no man may have just cause to complain, that he doth not understand enough for his Salvation; nor any man cast them aside, or read them with little Care

Care and Diligence, since there are so many things in them, which may require the utmost Study and Pains of the most judicious and Learned men.

7. There is no Prophet so obscure, but some Prophecies are very plainly delivered by him, which we know to have been fulfilled; and this is a Warrant and Assurance to us of his Mission, and that we ought to rely upon it, that whatever he has delivered concerning other things will as certainly come to pass; and in the mean time, before they come to pass, or are thoroughly understood, they are exceeding useful in the Church. The *Revelation* of St *John* is hard to be applied to particularevents, because it comprehends so vast a series of time, in which long course of years many events may be exactly alike at different times and in different places, and there may be a gradual and repeated Accomplishment of some of his Prophecies. But the time was at hand for the fulfilling of other of these Prophecies, *Rev. i. 3. xxii. 6, 7, 10, 12*, and we know they have been fulfilled in the seven Churches, *Rev. ii. 5, 16, 22, 23. iii. 3, 16*, which are proposed for examples to all others. *He that hath an ear, let him hear, what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, Rev. ii. 7.* The seven Churches are spoken to by Name, and what is said to them, having been fulfilled, is a certain argument that the rest, which concerns all other Churches, shall be fulfilled in its due time, tho it be not perhaps yet understood.

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But the obscurest Prophecies, even before their Accomplishment, are of perpetual and inestimable use to us. It is acknowledged by all, that Parables are very proper and fit for Instruction, and therefore in ancient times their Doctrines were wont to be delivered in that way, because it is a more familiar and easie method of teaching than by Rules, and Precepts, and Rational Discourse, without that Illustration which is given to them by supposing a particular case. For then every one is apt to make the case his own, when he sees the Precepts reduced to Example, and cloathed with Circumstances, and brought home, as it were, to his very senses, which before lay more out of sight, in abstract Notions and Speculative Discourse. And if feigned cases be so much more effectual than bare precepts or exhortations, an infallible account of the state of the Church in all Ages, tho we cannot point out the particular times and places, when and where every thing shall come to pass, must needs be of inestimable value and benefit.

To hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, to observe what errors and faults are reprov'd, and what vertues and graces are commended and encouraged in the seven Churches of Asia; the Praises and Adorations, ch. iv. and the Bliss of the Righteous, the joys of Heaven, and the rewards of Martyrs, ch. vii. the Terrors of the Great and Dreadful day, ch. vi. the great Apostacy that was to be upon the Earth, ch. xiii. the Patience and Faith of the Saints, and the Re-

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## *The Reasonableness and Certainty*

urrection of the Dead, ch. xx. the description  
 of the new *Jerusalem*, and the glory and hap-  
 piness of the City of God, ch. xxi, xxii. these  
 are the subject of *St John's Revelation*, and are  
 things of the greatest use and importance. We  
 have the state and condition of the Church in  
 all Ages presented to our view, tho we are not  
 able to mark out the particular times and sea-  
 sons meant in the several parts of the Prophecy.  
 And this is at least of the same use to us that all  
 History is, and besides may be of as much more  
 benefit, as it more nearly concerns us; for we  
 do not know but that we may be falln into the  
 worst times there prophesied of. *Here is the pa-  
 tience, and the faith of the Saints.* We see the  
 care and providence of God over his Church,  
 the wonderful deliverances which he is pleased  
 to work for it, the supports which he affords  
 his faithful Servants under persecutions, and  
 the rewards prepared for them, and the final  
 destruction of the Enemies of God and Religi-  
 on; these things are visible in the *Revelation*,  
 and it cannot be denied, but these are of excel-  
 lent use, to yield us comfort in the worst of  
 troubles, and to excite Faith and Hope, and  
 Patience, and all Christian Graces in the minds  
 of men. The *Revelation* of *St John* may be  
 look'd upon as an History of the Church  
 without any Chronology annex to it; but  
 still any man say, that the exactness and  
 brief History, that can be possible, of  
 the most important Affairs, and such  
 as concern all Mankind, is of little  
 value,

value or consequence to the Conduct and Management of our Lives, unless we were likewise acquainted with the particular time, and the Names of the Places and Persons described in it? It is as much as our Salvation is worth to be informed of a Future Judgment, tho' we are not told when it shall be; and that Book which sets Rewards and Punishments, Heaven and Hell before us, is of the greatest Advantage for the Edification and Salvation of Men, tho' the several Circumstances and Particularities described, are unknown to us.

8. Tho' the Arguments from Types are above all, apt to be look'd upon as uncertain, and to depend rather upon the Conjectures and Fancies of Men, than upon any clear Evidence: Yet we shall find the contrary, if we do but a little consider the Nature of them. A *Type* is a Likeness, a Form, or Mould, (as the word signifies) and where the *Antitype* represented by it, and prefigured, Answers exactly to it, there is no more question to be made, but that the one belongs to the other, than there is reason to doubt, when we see an Impression made upon Wax, what kind of Seal it was by which it was made; Or, when we see a good Picture of one we know, to enquire who sat for it. A *Type* is much of the same Nature in Actions or Things and Persons, as an Allegory is in Words: but Allegories are oftentimes so plain, that no man can well mistake what is meant by them. And thus it is as to Types in many Cases: Indeed  
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where there is but one Type or one Resemblance, it is not so easily discern'd; but where many concur, he must be very wilful that does not acknowledge the Agreement. When an Author, as it often happens, describes the Persons of his own Time under feigned Names, a Reader who knows nothing of it, may perhaps over-look one or two Characters, supposing them to be by chance; but when he perceives that they all exactly agree to so many several Persons whom he knows, he no longer doubts of the Author's Design. And when many Types concur in the same Person, with a great number of Particularities, any two of which perhaps never concurr'd in any one Man before; as in the Person of our Saviour these things concurr'd, that he was compell'd to carry his Cross, as *Isaac* had carried the Wood; that he was lifted up, and fastned to it, as the Brazen Serpent had been lifted up in the Wilderness; that as the Bones of the Paschal Lamb were not broken, so not a Bone of him was broken when the Bones of these were, who were Crucified with him; and that he was Crucified at the very time when the Paschal Lamb was to be Sacrificed: when so many different Circumstances concur, which have no dependance one upon another, nor upon the Will of Him, in whom they concur, but proceed from the Will (and as in this Case) from the Malice of others; if these things meet by chance, it must be a very extraordinary and unaccountable

ble Chance indeed, and much such another as that was, which some would persuade us made the World; it must be such a Chance as never happened before, nor will ever happen again. But must not these Men rather speak and think by chance, who can argue at this Rate?

Sometimes the Characters are so lively, that the Types are as evident as express Words could have made them; as when in the Description of the Kingdom of Christ, he is stiled *David*, because, as he was prefigured by *David*, so he was to descend from him, *Jer. xxx. 9. Ezek. xxxiv. 23: xxxvii. 24, 25. Hos. iii. 5.* several Descriptions which were Metaphorical in reference to the Persons immediately concern'd in them, were literally fulfilled in our Saviour: Thus the Gall and Vinegar, the Casting of Lots upon the Garments, and the Piercing of the Hands and Feet are Metaphorical Expressions; of great Contempt and Cruelty used towards the Persons to whom they were at first applied; but in their ultimate End and Design, they were true to the very Letter. And where there is thus a Two-fold Signification of any place of Scripture, the one improper and Metaphorical, the other proper and Literal; the Person described in Metaphorical Terms is as clearly a Type of him, from whose real Condition and Circumstances the Metaphor is taken, as a Metaphor is a Representation of the plain Sense contained under it.

The Legal Dispensation was all Typical, and so the Jews ever understood it to be; which made the Apostles dispute with them from the Types of their Law, as they surely would never have done, if it had not on all sides been agreed, that it was a proper way of Argument. Their Prophecies were given out in Actions as well as in Words; and as the Mind either of God or Man may be expressd as fully by Actions as by the plainest Words: So certainly we must acknowledge this to be the Case, when Types so evidently denote the Person, and so properly belong to him, as to declare and bespeak him to be the Man, in such a manner that we should conclude, that any Person of our own Times must needs be meant by any Author, who should thus describe him in a Book, the Design whereof was known to be, to make such Descriptions. It is not indeed every Resemblance which we may conclude from, but where many Types concur in the same Person, where the concurrence depends wholly upon the Will of his Adversaries, or not in the least upon his own Will; when these Types were alledged from a Dispensation, which was all along held to be Typical; in this case they may be urged, and as safely relyed upon as any other Argument.

III. In the last place, I am to shew, that the obscurity of the Scriptures is not such as

to

to be any prejudice to their Authority, nor to the End and Design of them. And the Reason of this is implied by St. Peter, when he says, that there are but *some things hard to be understood* in the Scriptures, and the rest are plain and obvious. All things necessary to Salvation are sufficiently clear in the Scripture; and tho' there be other things in them which are obscure, yet we see that Reasons may be given (and perhaps many more and better than I am able to produce) why they are and ought to be so. God supplies us in Necessaries with a bountiful and open Hand; and what is not necessary, he surely may discover more sparingly and more obscurely to us. It is so in the things of this Life: Our Senses seldom or never fail us in things necessary to our Life and Health, tho' in other things we find our selves misled by them; every Country and Place affords the Necessaries of Life; and that which is most rare is always least necessary; it may be useful, but yet we may very well be without it. Now to complain that all places of Scripture are not intelligible by all, is, as if we should blame Providence for not making all Men Rich, and all Countries like the Land of Canaan; it is a sign we are resolved to find fault, and never to be satisfied with what we have unless we be humoured in every thing. But we should do well first to consider, how we can expect this at God's Hands,



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or how well we have deserved it of Him. *The Secret of the Lord is with them that Fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* Psal. xxv. 14. *For the froward is an Abomination to the Lord, but his Secret is with the Righteous.* Prov. iii. 32. There are Secrets and Mysteries in Religion which cannot be supposed to be known to any but those, who are thro'ly acquainted with the plainer Doctrines, both in the Study and the Practice of them; and therefore if no such Reasons as have been now offered, could be given for the obscurity of the Scriptures in some places, it would be unreasonable, however, for such Men as make this an Objection to urge it; they have no Right to object whatever others may have; because they have never used the Means to know whether the Scriptures are so obscure as they pretend or or not. But they will never be able to prove, that if things necessary both in Faith and Practice be clearly set down, there may not be other things deliverd which are *hard to be understood*, and which those may *wrest to their own Destruction*, who are *unlearned and unstable*; that is, who have neither Learning and Skill enough to judge of such Matters, nor yet Constancy and Steadfastness enough in the Faith, to adhere to what they do understand, and not to perplex themselves, and suffer themselves to be perverted by judging rashly of things above their Capacity.

*The*

*The unlearned and unstable only are said to wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction: And tho' it is not in the Power and Capacity of every Man to be Wise and Learned, yet it is in every ones Power not to be unstable, but constant and stedfast to what he understands, and never to depart from it for any By-ends or Respects. Let us learn what is easy to be known, and Practise what we know, before we complain that the Scriptures are obscure. Let us study and practise the Scriptures more, and this Objection will not appear so formidable. But the Truth is, those that most use it, neither study nor practise them. And yet after all their Pretences of Obscurity, they have a greater quarrel against the plain parts of Scripture, than against the obscure ones; they know many places of Scripture which are plainly against them, and this makes them set themselves against all the rest.*

What has been here said in general, I hope may be in some Measure useful to those who desire to read the Scriptures for their Instruction and Edification; and in particular Difficulties Books must be consulted, or such Men as may be supposed to understand them. But as for all that are fond of Objections, and read the Scriptures only in search of them, it cannot be expected that Discourses of this Nature should signify much with them. *Teach us, O Lord, the way of thy Statutes, and we shall*

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shall keep it unto the End. Give us understanding and we shall keep thy Law: Yea we shall keep it with our whole Heart. Great is the Peace, that they have who love thy Law, and they are not offended at it. Psal. Cxix. 33, 34, 145.

## CHAP. VIII.

### Of Places of Scripture which seems to contradict each other.

(x) Multum enim refert, ut est in Epistola Adriani, quam recitavit Calpistratus L. Testium D. De Testibus, qui simpliciter videntur dicere, utrum unum eundemque meritum sermonem attulerint, an ad ea, quae interrogati sunt, ex tempore verisimilia responderint. Grot. in Adject. ad Dan. c. xiii. § 1.

**I.** Though the sacred Writers no where contradict themselves, or one another, yet they were not solicitous to prevent the being suspected to do so by injudicious and rash Men, as they would have been very cautious of giving any pretence for such a Suspicion, if they had written any thing but Truth. It could not be agreeable to the Sovereign Wisdom and Majesty of God to comply with the Humours and Fancies of Men; but rather, when he had by an infallible Guidance and Direction prevented the Pen-Men of the Holy Scriptures from writing any thing but Truth, to suffer them to write so, as that they might be liable to the Exceptions of the wilful and perverse. Because it is more (\*) suitable to the simplicity of Truth, not to be over-nice and solic-

solicitous about every Punctilio and smaller Circumstance; but to speak fully and intelligibly; and then to leave it to Men, whether they will believe or not; especially in what is told them for their own Advantage, the Relators having no end or design to serve by it, but only to do them the greatest Good they can; and bringing all the evidence for their Conviction, that Miracles and Prophecies can afford, which are the only Means of God's revealing Himself to Mankind, and then suffering in Testimony of what they have delivered.

Thus our Saviour, when notwithstanding all his Mighty works, many would not believe in Him, but questioned His Authority, and reviled His Person, and blasphemed the Holy Spirit, by which they were wrought, was not concerned to work more Miracles, merely for the Satisfaction, or rather at the captious Demands of these Men, when they required him to do it. For if they would be convinced by any reasonable Means, he had given it them; if they would not, it would be to their own Prejudice, he was not solicitous what they thought of him. And thus it is likewise in the Government of the World; God has given Men sufficient Evidence of His Being and Providence; but if Men will disbelieve His Providence and deny His Being, he doth not vouchsafe by any immediate and particular Act of His Power to confute their Pretences.

Pretences. And if, because of some places that are difficult in the Scriptures, Men will reject the whole, rather than be at the pains to search out the true Meaning of these places, or than be so modest and humble, as to suppose that there may be ways of Reconciling those, which appear to them, contradictions, tho' they have not yet found them out, they must fall under the same Condemnation with those, who will deny the Being of God, if they cannot satisfy themselves how he made and governs the world; or with those that would believe none of our Saviour's Miracles, unless he would work them when, and where, and just in what manner they pleased. But the wisdom of God sees that nothing would satisfy these Men, and that they only tempt God, and design no real Satisfaction to themselves: and therefore he cannot be obliged to new model the World, and alter the Scriptures for their sakes, since there is enough in them for the Satisfaction of all that are sincere in their Enquiries after Truth.

II. The only way to judge rightly of the particular places of any Book, is to consider first the whole Design, and Contrivance, and Method, and Style of it, not to criticize upon some difficult Parts of it, without any regard had to the rest. This is the Method used by all, who would criticize with Judgment upon any Author. And some Passages of Scripture are explained to our hands, to be a Key, as it

were,

were, and a Direction to us in the Explication of others. Thus, whereas in one place it is said, that Jesus baptized, in another it is said, that he baptized not, and the former place is expalined to be meant not of Baptism performed by Himself, but by his Disciples, who baptized in his Name. *Joh. iii. 22. iv. 1, 2.*

III. It is reasonable to observe whether the Objections be not such as do suppose Mistakes, which a Man, who could write such a Discourse, as they are imagined to be found in, could not run into. For if they be of this Nature, this very Consideration is enough to take off the force of the Objection against the Authority of any Book; and we must conclude that the Objections are capable of being answered, and that the Mistake lies not in the Book it self, but in the Readers, who without sufficient Skill or Attention, pass a rash Judgment upon it. For by all the Rules of Reasoning, an Objection may imply too much, as well as prove too little to be of any force: And the common Rules of Candor and Equity would prevent many Objections which are wont to be made against the Scriptures. For if we will but suppose the writers of the Scriptures to have been Men of any tolerable Sense, even without Inspiration, they could never have committed such mistakes as some would fasten upon them. We read *Exod. xxxiii. 11. And the Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a Man speaketh unto his Friend:*



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*Friend*; yet *Verf. 20.* the Lord answers *Moses*, who had besought God to shew him his Glory. *Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live.* Would it not be impudent Trifling to pretend any Contradiction in these two Verses, when they are easily understood in a consistent Sense, and no Man of any Judgment can be supposed to write Contradictions, and lay them so near together? When it is said, *Act. ix. 7.* that the Men, who journeyed with *St. Paul*, heard a Voice, but saw no man; and *Act. xxii. 9.* that they heard not the Voice of him that spake to *St. Paul*: besides the Explications which are known and obvious to reconcile these Texts, those, who will not be at the Pains to consult Expositors, or to consider the Importance of the Words, may be pleased to observe, that *St. Paul* was a Man bred to Learning, and this History of the Acts of the Apostles, shews him to have been, at least, a prudent and wise Man; and therefore he could never have written so palpable a Contradiction, as the Objection must suppose, in so small a Compass, concerning one of the most remarkable Things in his whole History, relating to a Person, with whom he constantly travelled and convers'd. I appeal to any Man, whether, if he had met with two such Passages, which seem to contradict each other, in *Thucydides* or *Xenophon*, or even in the very worst Historian, he would not be inclin'd rather to seek out for some way

way of reconciling them, than to suspect that he could so soon forget what he had written so little a while before, in an Account of a Thing of that Nature. Of the same kind is that Difference, which is between the Genealogy of Christ in *St. Matthew*, and that in *St. Luke*. For there is no doubt but the Genealogies of the *Jews* were then, and long after, extant in the Publick Registers, (x) they could repeat them by heart with as much readiness as they could their own Names; and to insert a wrong Genealogy had been to give up all the Arguments that could be alledg'd for our Saviour, being the Christ: Nothing could be more destructive to their Cause, than for the Evangelists to produce a false Pedigree, when the True one might be so easily produced, by any who had a mind to disprove them. The Merits of their Cause wholly depended upon the Proof of Christ's Descent from *Abraham* and *David*; and therefore whatever Difficulties there may now be thought to be in this Two-fold Genealogy; it was certainly acknowledged by those of that Age, and beyond all Dispute, or else it would never have been produced by the Evangelists, or had for ever ruined their Cause, if they had produced it.

Some Crimes are too great to charge upon Men of any Credit or Reputation; and some Errors are so notorious that no Man of common Prudence can be supposed to commit them: And therefore when we find an Author

(x) Ab eo  
ordio A-  
dam usque  
ad extre-  
mum Zo-  
robabel,  
omnium  
genera-  
tiones ita  
memori-  
ter veloci-  
terque  
precar-  
runt, ut  
eos summa  
putes re-  
ferre no-  
men Hie-  
ron in  
Tit. iii. 9.

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ther rational and consistent in other parts of a Discourse; the ordinary Ingenuity and Consider of Mankind will hinder us from supposing him to commit gross and palpable mistakes, and it is great dissingenuity and folly to shew the less Respect to any Author, because he is at least believed to have written by Inspiration, or to deny him the Respect due to a Man, because God has enabled him to write Infallible Truth.

IV. If any Contradictions be framed or forced from the various Readings; the difficulties in Chronology, or whatever else of this Nature is to be found in the Disputes of Criticks; they prove no more against the Authority of the Scriptures, than they do against the Authority of all other Books in the World, unless it could be shewn that these Difficulties could not happen in a Book written by Divine Inspiration, but that it must be first written in such a manner as to afford no occasion for Disputes, and that it must be ever after so preserved by a constant Miracle, that it may be subject to none of the Accidents and Casualties, to which all other Books are liable. On the contrary it can never be proved that God might not permit Books written by Inspiration, to be obnoxious to any such Casualties as are not prejudicial to the End and Design of a Revelation. But if the necessary points of Doctrine be preserved entire, and the Evidence of Matters

of

of *Fals* be sufficient to prove the Truth of the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* in Confirmation of that Doctrine; all lesser Matters may be left to the same contingencies which befall all other Books in the World.

That the Evidence is very clear and full in Proof both of the *Prophecies* and *Miracles*, which demonstrate to us the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, has been already shewn, and if no more could be produced than has by me been brought to prove their Authority; yet unless this can be proved to be insufficient from some mistakes or defects in it, no such Objections can invalidate it. Because no Man can prove that God might not suffer a Book written by his own Appointment and Authority, to be encumbered thro' length of Time, and the frailty and negligence of Men, with insuperable Difficulties, if it be supposed still to retain the visible Marks and Characters of a Divine Original in all the Evidence necessary to prove it from *Matter of Fact*, and in the *Doctrines* delivered by it. For as long as these two things are secured, all the rest tho' it be of never so great Use and Excellency, yet cannot be necessary in order to the ends of a Divine Revelation. And therefore a Book of Divine Revelation might be permitted by God for the Sins, and by the Fault and Ignorance of Men, to become perplexed with abundance of divers Readings, and even with Contradictions in the Chronologi-

tal and less material Points of it. For so long as it cannot be proved Defective as to the ends and purposes of a Divine Revelation, either for want of evidence to make it appear to be such; or thro' defect of the Matter and Doctrine contained in it; all other Difficulties will never prove it not to be of Divine Authority, because so long as there is no Defect, but what might be in any Book, tho' we suppose it to be of Divine Authority.

## CHAP. IX.

### *Of the Creation of the World and the Preservation of it.*

**B**Y Creation in the Book of *Genesis*, is understood not only the Production of the World out of Nothing, but the Formation and Disposal of the several Parts of the Universe. But there has an Opinion of late years prevailed, very injurious to Religion, and repugnant to Reason and the Judgment of former Ages; That God only created Matter and gave it Motion; to be performed under certain Laws, by which all the *Phænomena* of Nature both in the Creation and Preservation of Things are brought about, without any far-

farther immediate Divine Power or Concurrence, than what is just necessary to continue this Matter and Motion in Being; that is, God created Matter, and put it into Motion, and then Matter and Motion do all the rest in a settled Course, and by established Laws, without any need of the Divine Aid or Direction. This Notion indeed can never be reconciled to the Scriptures, but then it is as little befriended by Reason and Natural Religion. In proof of which, I shall consider: I. The Creation of the World, II. The Preservation of it; and shall shew, that neither of them could be performed in this way.

I. As to the Creation, we may consider both the *Time* and the *Manner* of it. And by the *Time* of the Creation, we may understand either the *Time*, when the Creation of the World began, or the *Time* which was taken up in the Creation of it. But this latter *Time* will come under what is to be said of the *Manner* of the Creation.

1. The *Time* of the Creation of the World, as that signifies the Beginning of *Time*, or of the Worlds Duration, must be wholly Arbitrary, and absolutely at God's Sovereign Pleasure and Disposal. For there could be nothing in eternal Duration to fix the Creation of the World more to one *Time* than another, or to determine why it should begin sooner or later. And since it is impossible that the world should be eternal; it is evident, that the *Time* of the



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Creation, whenever it was, can be no good Objection, because, tho' the World had been created never so long before, there must necessarily have been as much a Preence for such an Objection. For there must have been some Period of Time, when the World had existed no longer than it has done now: and no beginning of the World can be supposed so long ago, but still it might with the same Reason be ask'd, why it was not created sooner?

2. In considering the *Manner* of the Worlds Creation, I shall prove, (1.) That there is no Reason to suppose the World to have been at the first made by Mechanical Laws, tho' it were preserv'd according to such Laws. (2.) That there are sufficient Reasons to be given for its Creation in that Manner, which we find related in the Book of *Genesis*.

(1.) There is no Reason to suppose the World to have been at first made by Mechanical Laws, tho' it were preserved according to such Laws (whereas I shall afterwards prove, that it is not preserved according to them.) There is no Reason that the World should be first framed according to the Laws of Motion which are established for its Preservation and Government in its first and settled State. The Origin of the Universe was by the immediate hand of God, before the Appointment of the several Laws which afterwards were to take place; and we may as well en-

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deavour to reduce the working of Miracles to the standing Laws of Nature as the Creation of the World. For certainly of all Miracles the Creation of the World must be the greatest, not only as it signifies the Production of Matter and Motion out of Nothing, but as it was the putting things into such Order, as to make them capable of the Laws of Motion ordained for them. It is not yet agreed, nor is it ever like to be, what these Laws of Motion are, which the Philosophers so much talk of, and there being such a mutual Connexion and Combination of Bodies, and such a Dependence of every Body upon so many others in every Motion, it is impossible to know how any two Bodies would act upon each other, if they were separate from all Bodies besides, or were out of that State which they now are in. It is reasonable therefore to imagine, that the several Parts of the World must be ranged and settled before these Laws could take place; and to reduce the Creation of the World to the Laws of Motion which now prevail in it, is to suppose a Creation antecedent to that by which the World was made. This is as if an *Indian* should attempt to give an Account of the making of a Watch by the several Motions, which he sees performed in it after it is made, and should imagine that the Materials moving in such a manner, at last arrived to the exact frame of a Watch.

(2.) There are sufficient Reasons to be given

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given for the Creation of the World in that manner, which we find related in the Book of *Genesis*. It is great Presumption in Men to be too curious and inquisitive about the Reasons of God's Actions: for whatever he delivers of himself, we ought entirely to believe both the Thing it self and the manner and Circumstances of it. *Where wast thou when I laid the Foundations of the Earth, declare, if thou hast Understanding.* *Joh. xxxviii. 4.* But this must be said to the Glory of God, and to the Shame of all such as Censure and Cavil at his Word, that even by Men such Reasons may be given of his Actions, as all his Adversaries shall not be able to gainsay.

God hath ordered all things in Measure, and Number, and Weight, *Wisd. xi. 20.* And, as to those who enquire, why the World was created in six days rather than in one day, or in an instant, or in a long compass of Years, as the Laws of Matter and Motion, they say, require: It might be sufficient to ask, why, if it was God's Will, the World might not be created in six Days, as well as in any other number of Days or space of Time? If the Creation had been in an Instant, or in a longer or shorter space of Time, the Question might with as much Reason have been put, why it was not created in six days? Shall Men presume to prescribe to God the Time and Manner of his Actions? Is not his own Pleasure a sufficient Reason of them? The Manner of the Creation

tion and of the Flood, which have of late been the Subject of so many Disputes, depends solely upon the Will and Pleasure of God, and therefore we can know only by Revelation, how they were effected, and it is in vain to pretend that they must have come to pass in this or that Manner, unless it could be prov'd, that God could not bring them to pass any other way than that, which the Inventor of some *Hypothesis* thinks fit to propose. Most Actions may be performed very different ways; and if, for instance, we had only a general account of the Passage of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt* into the Land of *Canaan*; that *Pharaoh* pursuing them, was drowned with his whole Army; that they travell'd in the Wilderness forty Years, and had a sufficient Provision of Food, and Cloathing, and Water for so great a Multitude, in so barren a place, and for so long a time: tho' never so many Conjectures should be made, how all this might be, and never so many Schemes were drawn of their Journeyings and Encampments; if it could be supposed possible, that one of all these might prove true, yet it would be utterly impossible to know which were it. But when we are only told, that God created the World in six days, and that such and such things were created on each of these Days, that he brought a Deluge of Waters upon the whole Earth for the Sins of Mankind: which continued for such a time upon the face of the Earth; some Men

will

will needs assign the particular Means and Manner, by which both the Creation and the Flood must necessarily have been brought to pass, as if the wisdom and power of God, and the nature of things could admit of no other way, but what they can explain. VVe may esteem the Learning, and admire the Sagacity, and allow the good Intentions of these Authors; but when any one advanceth an *Hypothesis* in contradiction to all others, and proposes it, not as probable, but as the only true Explication of Scripture, and positively maintains, not only that things might be so, if God pleased, but that they were so, and could not be otherwise; this to me seems more unaccountable, than any thing I ever met with besides, in the very worst *Hypothesis*. We can know nothing of the way and manner how God has been pleased to do any thing but by his own Revelation. If each *Hypothesis* were possible, yet no man could be certain which were the right, or that any of them were so; because God might make use of some other Means than what Men can imagine. But when the several *Hypotheses* destroy one another, and every one pretends to set up his own in contradiction to all the rest, and none can maintain its Ground any longer than till another has been brought to confute it, it were strange, if Men should satisfy themselves with such Uncertainties, rather than with the plain word of God.

Accor-

According to any Mechanical Hypothesis, (tho' there were no *Vacuum*) so many Accidents must continually intervene in a Chaos of Matter confusedly rolling and knocking one part of it against another, that it seems next to an Impossibility, that it should ever settle into any Order: at least, if Matter had been left to its own workings and jumbings according to any Mechanical Laws of Motion, the world for ought any Man can prove, might not have been made to this Moment. So far is it from being possible to understand, how, upon Mechanical Principles, the world should have been made in six Years, rather than in six Days, consisting of four and twenty Hours. It is therefore the boldest Attempt that can be conceived for Men to pretend to assign the several steps and degrees in the process of this wonderful Operation, with as much ease and certainty, as if they had all the Materials by them in their Laboratory, and could perform it as readily as an ordinary course of Chymistry. Next to attempt the making of a world, what undertaking can be more daring than to pretend to discover how it was made? To make a World must undoubtedly be the work of God, and he alone can declare how he made it. But Reasons may be given for the Creation of the world in six Days: (1.) With Respect to Angels, (2.) With Respect to Men.



(a) Aug.  
*Super. Gen.*  
*ad Literam.*  
 lib. 4. c.  
 22. c.  
*De Civit.*  
*Dei lib.*  
 11. c. 7.  
 (b) The  
*Aquin.*  
*Sum. Part*  
 1. Qn. 58  
 Art. 6.

1. With Respect to the Angels. It is (a) St. *Augustine's* Opinion, that the six Days of the Creation of the World in the Book of *Genesis*, are distinguished according to the Perception which the Angels had of the Creation; from whence was framed that Distinction of the Schoolmen between *Cognitio Matutina*, and *Cognitio Vespertina*. And tho' what I am about to say, is not exactly agreeable to St. *Augustine's* Notion, yet I hope his Authority will warrant my arguing from this Topick to such as may think it new and singular.

The Angels were the beginning of the Creation, and were created probably in the Morning of the first Day. For in the Book of *Job*, God says, that when the Foundations of the Earth were laid, *the Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for Joy.* Job xxxviii. 7. from whence we learn that the Angels were created before this visible World, and glorified God for his creating it. Now the Angels, tho' blessed and glorious Spirits, yet are finite, and are unable to comprehend and fathom the wonderful works of God; there are things which the Angels desire to look into, 1 Pet. i. 12. and the more they know of God and his Works, the more they adore and praise Him. The whole Scene of the Creation seems to have been laid open in Order before them, according to the several Degrees and the various Natures of things, whereby they must have had a fuller View and a clear

clearer Understanding of the Divine Power and Wisdom, than they could have had, if the World had started forth in an Instant, and jump'd, as it were, into this beautiful Frame and Order. As he who sees the whole Method and Contrivance of any Curious piece of Art, values and admires the Artist more than one does, that beholds it in Gross. God was pleased therefore to display his Glory before the Angels, and by several steps and degrees, to excite their Praise, and Love, and Adoration, which moved them to *Songs* and *Shouts of Joy*, and by this means his Glory and their own Happiness was advanced, much beyond what it would have been, if all things had been created and disposed into their Rank and Order at one Moment. They look'd into the first Principles and Seeds of Things, and every day presented them with a glorious Spectacle of New Wonders; the first Seven Days of the World, they kept a continual Triumph or Jubile; and thus their Voices were tuned and raised, as I may say, to those Praises, which were to be their Employment and their Happiness to all Eternity; the more they saw, the more they knew, and the more they knew of the Works of God, the more they for ever loved and adored Him.

This affords us a Reason, why so much more time was spent in the forming of the Earth, and the Creatures belonging to it, than in the formation of the Heavenly Bodies. Because

cause the Heavens are of a Uniform and Similar Nature, and a vast *Vastum* is now supposed to be in them, and therefore the Nature of them might, without any successive Production, be displayed at once to the Angels; but the Earth being of a Compound Nature and containing Creatures of very different kinds, it required more time to give a distinct perception of the several Parts and Species of it. And the Planets being of the like Nature with the Earth, since the Earth, the Seat of Man's Habitation was framed by such leisurely degrees, as might give a suitable Idea of it; the other Planets might be framed at once, there being nothing more in them than what was observable in the Formation of the Earth, or they might be framed together with the Earth by the same Measures and Degrees.

But according to the Mechanical way the Angels would have only the Prospect of a vast Chaos, rolling and working for many thousands of years, perhaps before any thing considerable could have been framed out of it. And these tedious delays must yet according to this Notion have been carried on by such certain Methods, that there could have been little wonderful in it to an Angel, when the Mechanical Philosophers themselves think they can point out the several Steps and Motions, by which all was done.

The making of Man was the last and finishing

nishing Work of the Creation, when the World was prepared for the Reception of him, and he was made with much solemnity.

*Let us make Man in our Image after our Likeness.* Gen. i. 26. and the Man and the Woman were made apart. For *Adam* was Created with all the Perfections suitable for him, both as a *Man*, and as the *first Man*, out of whom *Eve* was to be formed: As *Man* he was to have all the Parts and Faculties which Men have now, but in greater Perfection; as the *first Man*, he was besides to have a *Rib* or (\*) *Part*, out of which the *Woman* was to be made. Which being the principal, and, as it were, the seminal Matter, no mention is made of any other; but as *Animals* and *Plants* are properly said to come from the *Seed*, tho' they are not made of that only; so *Eve* was properly made of *Adam's Rib*, tho' other Matter besides might go to her Composition. This way of Formation was to betoken that Love and Duty which ought to be between Husband and Wife. And as the Creation and Happiness of *Man* provoked the Envy of Evil Angels, so no doubt it occasioned the Joy and Praise of the Good ones.

(2.) By this successive and Gradual Production and Disposition of things in six days at the Creation; the Glory of God is likewise more manifested to Men than it would have been, if all had been done at once, or by

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(c) Dicunt etiam i u nam ex co sis ejus idem esse quod u nam ex partibus ejus, vel u nam partem ejus quam explicationem confirmant ex eo quod in Targum vocabulum Tzelab costa redditur per Serar ut Tzelab costa Tabernaculi redditur in Targum per Serar latus Tabernaculi; ita hic dicunt Mizalot ar idem esse quod Mizrohi. mon. More Nevoch. Part 2 c. 30.

slow and tedious Methods. This gives us a more clear and distinct comprehensive Notion of the Works of God than we could otherwise have had. It is acknowledged, that *Moses* has given such an Account of the Creation, as is more intelligible and better adapted to the Capacities of the generality of Men, than that which any one would now obtrude upon us as a true Account of it: But whatever Reasons can be assigned why the Creation should be described as it is in the Book of *Genesis*; the same Reasons will prove that it was fitting it should be so performed: If it be more suitable to the Capacities and Comprehensions of Men, that the Creation of the World should be delivered to us as finished in six days rather than in a less or a longer time; it was fit that it should have been really finished in this space of time, and should be indeed so performed as might make the History the more useful to us. For in respect of God it was alike to Create all things in an instant, or to do it successively in a shorter or a longer time; and in respect of Mankind no reason can be assigned why the History of the Creation should be delivered so as to represent it to Men as performed in this manner; but the same Reason will hold why it should have been in the same manner performed.

*God Blessed the Seventh day and Sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his Work*

Work which God Created and Made, Gen. ii. 3. and so, Exod. xx. 10, 11. the Observation of the Sabbath, or of one day in Seven to the Honour of God, is established upon the Worlds being Created in six days, and therefore, if it be reasonable to keep one day in Seven Holy in Remembrance of the Creation, it must be reasonable that the Creation of the World should have been performed in six days, since the Obligation to observe a Seventh day in remembrance of the Creation, implies that God rested on the Seventh day after he had Created the World in Six, or in the same space of time; which is contained in six days. God saw it fitting that a day should be set apart to Commemorate the Creation, and to Praise him for all his wonderful Works, and that this day should return at such a distance of time; and he observed such Order in the Creation, that every day between these Periods of time might bring some particular work of it to Remembrance, and every Seventh day might conclude in the Commemoration of the whole Creation.

Our Saviour answers the Pharisees, when they proposed the Question to him about Divorces, by putting them in Mind of the Order, which God used in the Creation, *Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them Male and Female? And saith for this cause shall a Man leave Father and Mother, and shall cleave to his Wife: and they*

*twain*



*Spain shall be one Fleſh?* Matth. xix. 4.  
 3. And St. Paul in like manner, to ſhew that the Woman ought not to uſurp Authority over the Man, proves it by this Argument: *For Adam was firſt formed, then Eve.* 1 Tim. ii. 13. and in another place and upon another occaſion he obſerves, that *the Man is not of the Woman, but the Woman of the Man.* 1 Cor. xi. 8. And long before the Prophet Malachi had Argued from the ſame Topick, Malach. ii. 15. And Hebr. iv. 4. it is noted, that *God did reſt the Seventh day from all his Works*, from whence the Apoſtle concludes, that *he that is entered into his reſt, he alſo hath ceaſed from his own Works, as God did from his,* Verſ. 10. Now as theſe and whatever other Arguments are to be found in the Scriptures of the like Nature, do evidently ſuppoſe the Creation of the World in the ſame manner, as it is related in the Book of *Genesis*; ſo they explain to us the Reaſons why it was thus Created. For all theſe Arguments had been loſt, and there could have been no ground for them, if the World had been otherwiſe created. As certainly therefore, as this Arguing from the manner of the Creation is good: So certain it is, both that the World was ſo Created, and that there was great Reaſon for it.

But whatever ſome Philoſophers may think now; there is nothing which would have been more diſagreeable to the Notions of the Generality of the wiſeſt Men in all Ages, than that

that the World should be made upon Mechanical Principles. *He spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast, Psal. xxxiii. 9. He Commanded and they were Created. Psal. Cxlviii. 5.* This expresses not only the Truth of the History but the general sense of Mankind, who have ever had this Notion of God, that to command and to do is the same thing with him. And therefore the Objection till of late has run the other way, that God did rather Create the World, in an instant than in six days.. It was little suspected formerly that divers Years or many Ages were spent in the Creation. It was in the Description of the Creation of the World that *Longinus* observed the sublime Style of *Moses*, and if the Relation of it be admirable, the Creation it self in such a manner as is there related, must be much more admirable. For it is proper for it to be thus described, for no other Reason, but because it was proper for it in this manner to be done. But what would *Longinus* have said, if the Creation had been related to have been performed not by any command which had its immediate effect, but by the tedious Process of Mechanical Causes? What Grandeur, what evidence of the Divine Power and Majesty is there in this more, than in any Chymical Operation, if the Mechanical *Hypothesis* were true?

It were strange Presumption to demand of Almighty God a Reason of all his Actions, and not to believe him upon his Word, that he has done any thing, but when and how  
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some Men conceit it ought to have been done. But what I have now said may at least serve to silence the Cavils of such Men.

2. The Preservation of the World is not performed according to Mechanical Laws or Principles. The Mechanical *Hypothesis* supposes that Bodies act upon Bodies, or Actives upon Passives in a certain course, and according to such Laws as that, being left to themselves, they necessarily produce their Effects without any immediate Interposition of a Divine Power. But this Notion is grounded wholly upon mistakes.

1. It supposes that there was at first a certain quantity of Motion infused or impressed upon Matter which still continues passing from one Body to another according to certain Methods or Rules prescribed. But this Supposition that there is always the same Quantity of Motion in the World is wholly precarious, or rather notoriously false, and the best Philosophers have been able to give no Account how Motion can be Communicated without an immediate Impulse or Concourse of the Divine Power.

2. By the Mechanical *Hypothesis* it is supposed as a thing certain, that there is a *Ple-num*, which at least is very uncertain, or rather it has been demonstrated by Mr. *Newton*, that there is a *Vacuum* not only interspersed, but of a Prodigious and almost incredible extent at the distance of the Earths Simi-  
diane.

diameter from us. And by his Principles, Gravitation must proceed from an immediate and constant Impression or Impulse of God: For it proceeds from no Action of one Body upon another, but is a Quality belonging to all Matter alike, and to every particle of Matter, however separate and distant from all others: The *Projectile* Motion, and that *Attractive* Force, by which the Planets are carried in their Orbits cannot be communicated or performed according to any Mechanical Laws, whereby they are determined from a *Rectilinear* to an *Orbicular* Motion. For Bodies can act upon Bodies only by Contract, and therefore cannot Communicate their Motion, or any way determine, or affect the Motion of each other in a *Vacuum*, so vast as it must be near the Circumference of the several Orbits, so that the old *occult Qualities* and *Substantial Terms* were not more repugnant to the Mechanical *Hypothesis* than these Principles are. The being of a *Vacuum* must suppose an immediate Divine Power necessary to keep the System of the World in that order in which we see it continue. For otherwise by this Principle of Gravitations, being inherent in every Part of Matter, all Bodies would press towards the Center, and in a *Vacuum* there can be nothing to hinder their tendency towards it, till they come crowding one upon another; so that all the Order of things would soon be reduced to one confused

Heap or Moss, unless some immaterial Power interposed to hinder it.

It is evident then that the Mechanical *Hypothesis* is quite destroyed by these Principles. For by these here is no Connexion of Causes and Effects according to any Laws of mere Matter and Motion; but all must be done by the immediate Power of God, Gravitation and the Projectile Motion must be impressed and suspended without any dependance upon surrounding Bodies; they must produce their Effects thro' prodigious void Spaces, where Bodies have no Communication of Motion from one to another. And all being performed by the immediate directing and assisting Hand of God, a Man may as well pretend to solve a Miracle Mechanically, as to give any Account of the *Phænomena* of Nature by Mechanical Laws according to these Principles.

3. The Abettors of the Mechanical Hypothesis argue, that God acts in the most General and Uniform ways, that it is more becoming his Wisdom to let Nature have its course, and that constantly to interpose, would be a disparagement to the Order and Contrivance in his Establishment of the Laws of Motion; that Matter and Motion are with that Wisdom set to work, that they can perform all without any more than preserving and sustaining them in their Being and Operations; and that he is the best Artist, who can contrive  
an

an Engine that shall need the least meddling with, after it is made. But it ought to be considered, what the Nature of the Engine is, and what the ends and uses of it are, and if the Nature of it be such, that it cannot answer the ends for which it was framed without sometimes an assisting Hand, it would be no point of Wisdom in the Artificer, for the Credit of his Contrivance, to lose the most useful Ends design'd by it. As if among other uses this curious Engine were design'd to reward the Good and punish bad Men; to remove the punishment upon Amendment, and to renew it upon a Relapse: Since Brute Matter is incapable of varying its Motion, and suiting it self to the several States and Changes of Free Agents; he must assist it unless he will lose the Chief end for which it is to serve. It is no defect in the Skill and Wisdom of the Almighty, that Matter and Motion have not Free will as Men have: But it would be a great defect in his Wisdom, not to make them the Instruments of Rewards and Punishment, because it is impossible for them of themselves to apply and suit themselves to the several States and Conditions of Free Agents.

The Nature of Matter and Motion is such, that they cannot serve all the Designs of their Creator without his Interposition, and therefore he constantly doth interpose according to a certain Tenour which he has prescribed to



himself; but this Tenour and Course is altered upon some important Occasions. In a natural and ordinary way he Cures Diseases, sends Rain or dry Weather, or else our Prayers to him would be insignificant upon such Occasions, and there would be no room left for his inflicting these Temporal Rewards and Punishments. He feeds the Hungry that cry to him, and he punishes the Wicked when he sees it fitting, by Famine, or Drought, or Pestilence, in the ordinary Methods of his Providence. But sometimes he alters these ordinary Methods, and acts above them or contrary to them, to signalize his Mercy or his Judgments: And thus Christ fed so many thousands in the Wilderness, and God Rained down Fire from Heaven upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* by a particular and miraculous Dispensation. Miracles are the particular Appointment of God in peculiar Cases and Occasions, and the course of Nature is his general and perpetual Appointment at all other times. God at no time leaves Nature to it self, but ever concurs with it, by assisting its Power and directing its course, he ordinarily interposes in the constant course of Things according to established Laws: But Miracles are his wonderful Work, when he interposes in an extraordinary manner, and alters that Method which he has prescribed to himself to observe in the common course of Nature. God doth not in an extraordinary manner inter-

terpose to prevent the irregular or unusual productions of Nature as in monstrous Births, &c. For how irregular soever these may seem, yet they are according to this standing Rule, that they shall be suffered to happen in certain Cases; and they rarely happening, serve to illustrate the Divine Wisdom in contriving Nature, so that in its general Course all its Operations should be regular and uniform; and from hence it appears that God doth not extraordinarily interpose to alter the Course of Nature, but for great Ends, Superiour to those which concern only the material World.

We may well suppose that God has as much regard to his Wisdom in his Government of the Moral, as of the Material Part of the Creation; and yet he has added supplemental Laws to enforce the Moral Laws, and these additional Laws have been changed, as the Circumstances and Condition of Men required. Why then should the Laws of the Material World be so much more sacred, as that he should never intermeddle with them? He assists Moral Agents with the continual supplies of his Grace, and natural Agents with that help which is needful for them to perform his will. God may hasten and assist natural causes upon our Prayers, he may quicken the Motions and enforce the Powers of Nature, and remove secret Impediments, to help and make way for natural Operations, or he may slacken or retard natural Causes.

*The Reasonableness and Certainty*

To say that God has so ordered the course of Nature as upon the fore-sight of Mens Prayers to him, to grant them what they Pray for, and upon the fore-sight that they will not Pray, to withhold from them what they want by Mechanical Laws, is by no means satisfactory. For there is neither Proof nor possibility of Proof of it, it is merely a Supposition without any ground of Reason, but only this, that the Mechanical Notion cannot otherwise be maintained. But I will suppose with much more Reason, that two Men are Sick of the same Disease, that the Circumstances of the Disease are all the same, and all outward Accidents likewise the same, till the Prayers of one of them make a Difference. For one of these Men upon his Prayers Recovers, the other neglecting to Pray, Dies. The natural Causes are supposed to be the same, excepting only so far as Prayer moves God in his Mercy to make a Difference in their Case. To say that this never happened, is wholly precarious, and hard to believe, since it probably may often happen in Epidemical Distempers; but it is much harder to believe that it can never happen; and if this either have or can happen, it is not upon fore-sight of their Prayers, by the contrivance of Mechanical Laws in their first Establishment, but by an immediate Act, that God assists Men upon their Prayers to him. The strange Providential Deliverances of some certain Persons are observable in every

Age

Age, and all Histories mention them. But how shall particular Men, amidst the greatest Dangers, be preserved in the common Calamities of the Sword, and Famine, and Pestilence, but by a particular interposing Providence? Were these Men who have been so remarkably preserv'd all of one Constitution; or do Soldiers Slay Mechanically, tho' the Plague and Famine should be supposed to do so? I wonder it should be thought less agreeable to Philosophy, for God to interpose in directing natural Causes than in over-ruling Moral Agents, where the Designs of the Providence equally require it. The same Providence delivers both *from the snare of the Hunter and from the noisome Pestilence. A thousand shall fall besides thee, and ten thousand at thy Right Hand, but it shall not come nigh thee, Psal. xci. 3. 7.*

4. The Mechanical Philosophy proceeds upon a wrong Notion of God, supposing it unworthy of him to be concerned immediately in every thing which is done. We may as well imagine it below him to know every thing, as to suppose it unworthy of him to concern himself in it: And yet he cannot but know every thing being Omniscient, and he cannot but concur in every Operation of natural Causes, being Omnipresent, and wherever he is, he Acts. It is the Perfection of the Eye to see all that is within View, how small and inconsiderable soever it be; nay, the smaller the Object discerned is, the more perfect it

proves the right to be: And if a Man could do every little thing at the same time that he does things of Importance, and with no trouble to himself, it would be surely more perfection in him than to do these only. But a Variety of business is troublesome to Men, and small Affairs hinder and call them off from those of moment. Tho' with God it is quite otherwise; he acts with the same Ease wherewith he sees or knows or exists; he knows all things with one Omniscient Thought, and he does all things by one omnipotent Act, nothing can be in the least difficult to him, and nothing can be done without him, *in Him we live and move and have our Being.* *Alf.* xvii. 28. And what the Scripture delivers relating to the Creation and Preservation of the World, may in strictness of Philosophy be taken in a proper and literal Sense. But do Men indeed consider what it is to make and preserve a World, when they pretend to shew by what steps God proceeds in it, and to explain the whole Process, as it were, of the Operation? Is there not infinite Wisdom required to know what infinite Power only can effect?

And after all, it is very probable both from Scripture and from Reason, that the invisible and immaterial part of the Creation has a greater Share in the guidance and conduct of the visible and material part of it, than is commonly supposed. For since the wonderful

ful improvement of experimental Philosophy, and the various *Hypotheses* which have been raised upon it; Men have been apt to look upon natural Philosophy not only as a distinct Science, but as wholly separate from the rest, as if there were no subordination and dependence between the visible and invisible World; whereas it is reasonable to believe that there is a continued Connexion and Chain of Causes in the Operations and Productions of things, and a constant influence and intercourse between the Superior and Inferior Created Beings. It is certain that God useth the Ministry of Angels in the Government of the World, but how far, and to what particular purposes, and upon what occasions, no Man is able to determine: However, those who have been the most curious inquirers into Nature, daily meet with so many new and strange Discoveries, that they have been forced to complain, that the contrivers of *Hypotheses* have been too hasty in framing them without a sufficient number of Experiments; from whence we may conclude, that if Men will first content themselves to make Experiments in order to give a true History of the *Phænomena* of Nature before they attempt to solve them upon their own Principles, the World will have an end before any compleat System can be contrived to give any tolerable Account of them.

I will conclude this Chapter in the Words  
with



## *The Reasonableness and Certainty*

with which M. *Huygens* concludes his Conjectures concerning the Planetary Worlds. For my part, says he, I shall be very well contented, and shall count I have done a great matter, if I can but come to any knowledge of the Nature of things as they now are, never troubling my Head about their Beginning, or how they were made, knowing That to be out of the reach of Human Knowledge, or even Conjecture.

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## CHAP. X.

### *Of other Habitable Worlds besides this Earth.*

**T**Hose who think that there must be other Worlds inhabited besides this Earth, where we dwell, or that else the Planets would be useless, and the Stars, which are like so many Suns, would shine to little purpose, do not consider, that

I. It is as easy for Omnipotence to make a Planet or Star, as it is to make the least thing in Nature.

II. The Glory of God Almighty in manifesting his Power and Wisdom, by making and preserving such vast Bodies in their several Orbs and Motions may be a sufficient Reason  
for

for their Creation, tho' his Wisdom should see it fit not to have them inhabited. For tho' every thing be equally easy for God to perform, yet men are apt to admire the Works of this kind most. They employ the Wits of many Men in all Ages to consider their End and Nature, and to calculate their Distances and Motions, whose Curiosity might otherwise be very ill employed: there are some Genius's design'd, as it were, for these Studies, and they would want Matter to work upon without such Objects.

III. As the Satellites of *Jupiter* and *Saturn*, and many of the fixt Stars were not discovered, till the Invention of Telescopes; so there are admirable Marks of Wisdom in many other Parts of Nature, which were never known till of late, and never could have been discovered, but by the help of Mycrosopes. But Men are not the only Creatures, which are capable of praising and magnifying God for his wonderful Works: Angels, who know them more perfectly, do it much more; and they have need of no Artificial Instruments to make Discoveries of the Divine Wisdom and Power.

IV. The Stars may be of great Benefit and Usefulness in the World, tho' they neither have that Influence which Astrologers vainly suppose, nor are as Suns to other Earths: For they serve to keep the circumjacent Air or *Æther* in Motion, which otherwise would con-

great

geal or stagnate; and to maintain that perpetual Circulation or Fluid Matter, which passes from Orb to Orb, through the Universe, and gives Life to all Things.

V. Tho' this Earth be but small in comparison of the Ambient Heavens; yet the Inhabitants of it, from the Beginning of the World to this time have been exceeding numerous, and may be still vastly more numerous before the end of it. And we must consider the Earth, not as it is at one particular Time, but as it is the Seat of Mankind, and the Habitation of all Generations for all Successions of Ages. And under this Notion the Earth is no such contemptible Place, tho' it be very small in respect of the Heavens that surround it. Nor is it strange that the Material World, how capacious soever it be, should be made for Mankind, to whom the Angels are *Ministring Spirits*, and for whom the Son of God himself was pleased to die.

VI. There are few or none of the Planets, but what by reason of their too near or too remote Distance from the Sun, seem incapable of being inhabited. M. *Huygens* in his *Conjectures concerning the Planetary Worlds*, says, that this (\*) Water of our Earth would in  
 (\*) Lib. 1. *Saturn* and *Jupiter* be frozen up immediately, and in *Venus* and *Mercury* it would be evaporated; and he concludes, that every Planet must have its *Watens* of such a Temper, as to be proportioned to its Heat; *Jupiter's* and  
*Saturn's*

*Saturn's* must be of such a Nature, as not to be liable to Frost, and *Venus's* and *Mercuries* of such, as not to be easily evaporated by the Sun. He says, (xx) That the Heat of the Sun is nine times greater in *Mercury* than with us: (xx) lib. in *Venus* it is twice as hot as with us, the Light and Heat in *Mars* is twice, and sometimes three-fold less than ours. If there were any Inhabitants in *Jupiter*, they would have but the five and twentieth Part of the Light and Heat, that we receive from the Sun, and those in *Saturn* but the hundredth Part. Upon which account he is very hard put to it to furnish out Inhabitants for the rest of the Planets: but as for the Moon, and the *Satellites's* moving about *Saturn* and *Jupiter*, he does as good as give up the Cause, by reason that they are neither Seas, nor Rivers; nor Clouds, nor Atmosphere or Vapours, nor any kind of *Water*. Besides, that the time of Light and Darkness in the Moon being equal to fifteen of our Days, if the Bodies of the Inhabitants were such as ours are, he observes, that those who had the Sun pretty high in their Horizon must be like to be burnt up in such long days, and those that liv'd under the Poles of the Moon, would be as much pinch'd with Cold; as our *Whale-fishers* are about *Iceland* and *Nova Zembla* in the Summer-time. And the Summer and Winter in the Moons or *Satellites* of *Saturn* are fifteen Years long; and therefore they may well be concluded to be uninhabitable: But because it may be alledg'd, that

that the same thing was believed of the Frigid and Torrid Zones, before Experience convinced Men of their Mistake; and that, however, there may be other Planets or Earths yet undiscovered, at convenient Distances from some of the fixt Stars: I observe, that tho' it should be granted, that some Planets be habitable, it doth not therefore follow, that they must be actually inhabited; or that ever they have been. For they might be design'd, if Mankind had continued in Innocency, as Places for Colonies to remove Men to, as the World should have encreased, either in Reward to those that had excell'd in Vertue and Piety, to entertain them with the Prospect of New and Better Worlds; and so by degrees, to advance them in proportion to their Deserts, to the Height of Bliss and Glory in Heaven; Or as a necessary Reception for Men (who would then have been immortal) after the Earth had been full of Inhabitants. And since the Fall and Mortality of Mankind, they may be either for Mansions of the Righteous, or Places of Punishment for the wicked, after the Resurrection, according as it shall please God, at the End of this World to new modify and transform them. And in the mean time, being placed at their respective Distances, they do by their several Motions contribute to keep the World at a Poise, and the several Parts of it at an *Equilibrium* in their Gravitation upon each other, by Mr. *Newton's* Principles.

VII. It has been suggested by (\*) Learned Men, that the Planets may possibly be inhabited by Rational Creatures of a different Nature from Mankind; their Souls may be of an inferior or superior Order to ours, and their Bodies of a different Form and Composition, and there may be different Laws of Union and Communication between the Operations of their Souls and the Motions of their Bodies: For there is no necessity to believe, that there can be no sort of Rational Animals but Mankind.

But I offer most of what I have said on this Subject, only as Conjectures, which have at least so much Probability in them, as to silence the Objections brought against the Scriptures on these Accounts. For unless a Man can prove these or the like Conjectures false, which I am perswaded no man can ever do, he must forbear urging Objections, that will be insignificant, if these Conjectures, or such as these, should be true. It is hard to assign every particular End and Use of many other wonderful Things in Nature, but lately discovered by Microscopes, as of any thing observable in the Heavens, either by the naked Eye, or by Telescopes. And when the Scriptures mention those Uses of the Heavenly Bodies, which more immediately concern our Earth, this doth not deny or exclude any other Uses, for which they may be design'd.



## CHAP. XI.

*That there is nothing in the Scriptures which contradicts the late Discoveries in Natural Philosophy.*

**I**T has been well observed by divers Writers upon this Subject, that the Scriptures were written with no design of Teaching us Natural Philosophy, but to instruct us in the Knowledge of God and of our selves; to teach us our Duty, and shew us the way to live and die well: and therefore they might make use of Popular Expressions and Forms of Speech, neither affirming nor denying the Philosophical Truth of them, but intending them only in that Sense and Meaning, which was their sole Design in using them. All proverbial Sayings and Metaphorical Expressions by way of Illustration or Ornament, must be taken from received Notions; but they are not therefore asserted in the Philosophical Sense by him, who useth them any more than the Historical Truth of Parables and Similitudes is supposed to be asserted. And to have made use only of Philosophical Terms and

Notions

Notions, and have rectified the Vulgar Conceptions of Men concerning all the *Phænomena*, which upon occasion are made mention of in the Scriptures, would have required a large System of Philosophy, which had made the Scriptures a Book unfit for Vulgar Capacities, and for the use of the greatest part of those for whom they are designed. This Theory of Nature would besides have seemed as strange and incredible to most Men, even as Miracles can do. For there is hardly any thing that Men unacquainted with Philosophy are more startled at than Philosophical Discoveries. How incredible doth the Motion of the Earth, and the rest of the Sun seem to all Men but Philosophers? Who are generally now agreed in it, whilst the Rising and Setting of the Sun are Expressions now as much in use with such as hold the Earth's Motion, as with others: And indeed they must speak so, if they will be understood, and excepting this one Instance, which is and ever will be in use according to the vulgar Conception in all Countries and Languages, notwithstanding any Philosophical Discoveries; I know nothing in the Scriptures, which is not consistent with the present Notions of Philosophy.

II. And yet that place of Scripture, which is most objected on this Occasion, is so express, as that no Advantage can be taken against it. *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;*

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and

and thou Moon, in the Valley of Ajalon. *Joshua* x. 12. Stand thou still, or as we read in the Margin, Be thou *silent*; be still, do not interrupt our Victories, and take part with the Enemy by withdrawing thy Light, and favouring his escape. And again, *Vers. 13. The Sun stood still* (or was silent) *and the Moon staid*, where the Word applied to the Moon signifies properly to stay or stand still, but the Word used concerning the Sun is Metaphorical, as if it had been purposely so ordered, because the Moon moves, but the Sun only seems to do so: which is further confirmed by the following part of the same *Vers.*, where in the Citation from the Book of *Jasher*, the same Word is used of the Sun, which was before used of the Moon, signifying that the Sun properly stood still. For the Book of *Jasher* is cited in its own words; but when *Josbna*, who wrote by Inspiration, set down the words of the Holy Spirit, he expresseth the thing so, that it cannot be from thence infer'd, that the Sun must be supposed to move, but rather the contrary; tho' immediately after, in a Citation from another Book, he inserts the Expression of an Author, who had followed the vulgar Opinion.

III. Gen. i. 6. *And God said, let there be a Firmament in the midst of the Waters.* The Word translated Firmament is in the Margin rendred *Expansion*, by which seems to be meant this Orb, in which the Earth is placed;  
and

and by the Waters *above the Firmament* or Expansion, may be meant the Waters beyond the Circumference of our Orb, and belonging to the Planets; and by the Waters *under the Firmament*, may be understood the Waters belonging to the Earth, and contain'd within its Expansion. For at first all was one confused Heap of Waters, without any Distinction of Orbs; the Mass of Waters being extended throughout, before the several Orbs were appointed; but then the Waters belonging to each Orb were caused to subside towards their several Centers, till they being gathered together in their proper Channels and Receptacles, the dry Land appeared.

I confess I once thought this had been only an Explication of my own, but I have since found, that it is of equal Date with the Modern Philosophy, and that it has likewise been lately used by others. Indeed it seems to be so easy an Exposition, that I believe it would come into most Mens Minds, who would consider how this Text may be explain'd according to the new Philosophy. Others suppose the *Firmament* to signify the Region of the Air, and by the Waters *above the Firmament*, they understand the Vapours contained in the Clouds. *When he uttereth his Voïce there is a Multitude of Waters in the Heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the Earth. Jer. x. 13.*

IV. The Sun and Moon are called *Twa*

## The Reasonableness and Certainty

*great Lights*, Gen. i. 16. But this doth not imply that either of them is greater than the fixt Stars, which are not spoken of till the latter end of the Verse, But the Sun is the *great Light* that *rules the day*; and the Moon the *great Light* that *rules the Night*, the Moon being in respect of the Light which she gives us, bigger than any fixt Star; for She gives us more Light than they do, in some sense, however, and with respect to us the Moon is the greater Light, tho' the Stars are the greater Luminous Bodies. Consider this Luminary as it concerns us; and it is in that conception greater than the biggest Star. Yet the Sun and the Moon are not said to be greater Lights than the fixt Stars, nor as great as they are: But are only called *great Lights* which they certainly are, tho' every Star should be bigger than either of them. The Stars are plainly spoken of by themselves, and apart from the Sun and Moon, without any comparison or relation to them. *And God made two great Lights, the greater Light to rule the Day, and the lesser Light to rule the Night: He made the Stars also:* That is, besides the two great Lights which are the Sun and Moon, He made the Stars, which are distinguished from these, and not reckoned with them, but are spoken of by way of Parenthesis. The Stars being of another Division of Celestial Bodies, and belonging to other Orbs, are mentioned here distinctly, and not with any comparison to the Sun and Moon:  
But

But will any Man deny that the Sun and Moon are great Lights, because the Stars are great Lights too, and as big perhaps as the Sun, and bigger than the Moon? There are in *Europe* many great Cities, and there are great Cities likewise in other parts of the World: Doth therefore he that says there are great Cities in *Europe* to Rule the Neighbouring Countries and Cities in other parts of the World, also, say, That the Cities of *Europe* are greater than any Cities in the rest of the World? Or if any one should say God made four great Rivers to Water Paradise, and Rivers in other places also, would he thereby affirm, that the Rivers of Paradise were larger than all the Rivers in the World besides?

V. 1 Sam. ii. 8. We read of the Pillars of the Earth; but this is spoken Metaphorically, and by Pillars of the Earth may be meant the Power of the Princes of the World, mentioned but just before. In the like sense it is said, Psal. lxxv. 3. The Earth and all the Inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the Pillars of it. We find mention made of the Pillars of the Earth, Job. ix 6. which is to be understood of the Earth's unmoveable stability, (\*) as St. Jerom observes, and so the other Texts may likewise be understood by the Pillars of the Heavens, Job xxvi. 11. we are to understand that Power which supports and upholds them.

(x) Columnas  
hoc loco  
pro stabilitate terræ intelligamus, quam Deus super semet ipsam immobilissimam mole fundavit St. Hieron. ad Job ix. 6.

VI. Job xxxvii. 18. The Sky is said to be

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strong,



strong, and as a Molten Looking-glass, that is, to be durable, and resembling a Molten Looking-glass. But however they be taken, these are the Words of *Elihu*: And *Job's* Friends sinned in what they charged him withal, and therefore he may be supposed to make so innocent a mistake, as to think the Heavens solid, or at least, he as well as the rest might speak the Language of those that did think so.

VII. *Job* speaks strictly according to Philosophy, when he saith, *that God hangeth the Earth upon Nothing*, *Job. xxvi. 7.* And we read, *Psal. xxiv. 2.* That the Lord hath founded the Earth upon the Seas, and established it upon the Floods, and, *Psal. Civ. 3.* that he hath laid the Foundations of the Earth, that it should not be removed for ever. All which is as exactly as any Philosopher can speak. For the Foundation of a pendulous Globe can be nothing but its Center, upon which all the parts lean and are supported thereby. And the Waters continually flowing thro' the Bowels and Cavities of the Earth from the depths of the Sea, by a constant Course and Circulation, constitute an Abyss of Waters in the lowermost parts of the Earth. So that with great Propriety of Speech, the Terraqueous Globe is said to hang upon nothing, and the Earth to be founded upon the Seas and Established upon the Floods; and, *Psal. Cxxxvi. 6.* to be stretched out above the Waters.

These

These are the places of Scripture, which as far as I have observed, have been most accepted against in this particular; and yet there is nothing in them but what may be accounted for upon the Principles of Modern Philosophy.

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## CHAP. XII.

### *Of Man's being created capable of Sin and Damnation.*

IT is sufficient to prove the Reasonableness of God's Proceedings with Mankind, if none are punished, but those that deserve Punishment, and none punished more than they deserve; and all are rewarded, who by a Faithful and Sincere, tho' but a very imperfect Obedience are become qualified for a Reward. God can do nothing but what is perfectly Just, and Infinitely Merciful, and we must be very unreasonable, if we cavil at his Proceedings, which are consistent not only with Justice and Equity, but with Mercy it self. For where neither his Justice nor his Mercy and Goodness interpose, we must surely acquiesce in the Divine Pleasure, unless we can think that God himself should be

more confined in his Actions than Men are : For within the Limits of Justice and Mercy, it is certainly left at the Liberty of every Man in any Office or Authority, to do as he thinks fit. Yet as God is pleased in his dealings with Men, to appeal to their own Reason for the Equity of them; so there is nothing in all his Proceedings with us, but it may be made appear to be more reasonable, even according to the Notion that we have of things, than the contrary would have been.

It must be considered, that no Created Being can in its own Nature be incapable of Sin or Default, Because it cannot be infinitely perfect; for it is inseparable from all Creatures to have but finite Perfections, and whatever has bounds set to its Perfections is in some respect imperfect, that is, it wants those Perfections which a Being of Infinite Perfections alone can have. So that imperfection is implied in the very Essence of Created Beings, and what is imperfect may make Default. All inanimate things may deviate from the Regular course of their Natures, as they would certainly do, if the Divine Wisdom and Power did not guide and maintain them in it. And every rational Being must naturally have a Liberty of Choice, that is, it must have a Will to chuse, as well as an Understanding to Reason: For we have no notion how there can be Reason without Choice. A Faculty of Understanding without a Will to deter-

determine it, if left to it self, must always think of the same Object, or proceed in a continued Series and Connexion of Thoughts, without any Aim or End, which would be a perpetual Labour in vain, and tedious Thoughtfulness to no purpose: But, if it should be sometimes determined by something External to new Objects; yet, what use of Reason could there be in Contemplations, which were merely obtruded and forced upon the Mind? And because Rational Creatures must have some prescribed Rule of their Actions, from which being free Agents, they may depart; they must in their own Nature be capable of Sin: God is Infinite Perfection, and therefore is a Rule to himself, and his Essence is incapable of any other Rule of his Actions; he only Acts according to his Essence, from which it is impossible for him to vary. But the most perfect Creatures must act by a Rule, which is not essential to them, but prescribed them by God, and is not so intrinsic to their Natures, but that they may decline from it, for a free Agent may follow or not follow the Rule appointed, or else it would not be free.

The Difficulty therefore is not, why Man was Created capable of Sinning; for he could not possibly by his Creation and in his Nature be incapable of it; this is peculiar to God, who is infinite Perfection; that all Sin should be a contradiction to His very Nature and Essence. But the Question which has been started

started by some Men, if they State it right, must be this, How it came to pass, that God did not sustain and preserve Men by an irresistible Power from falling into Sin, when Damnation was to be the consequence of it? In answer to which, it might suffice to say, that in the Creation God must be supposed to act by His divine Preogative, and by His arbitrary Will and Power; *He giveth not account of any of his Matters.* Job xxxiii. 13. but it is enough for us to know, that he made Man happy, and capable of continuing happy, and that there could be no necessity, why he should force him to continue so. Tho' we want not in the mean time Reasons to prove, even to our weak and imperfect Understandings, that it was expedient that the Happiness or Misery of Man should depend upon his own Choice, rather than that he should be kept unavoidably from all sin, and be placed out of all possibility of Punishment and Misery. I. Because the Glory of God is hereby more advanced, and all the Attributes of His Wisdom, and Justice, and Goodness are more displayed, than if Men had been inevitably restrain'd from sinning. II. Because this conduceth more to the Happiness of the Blessed, than a Necessity of not sinning could have done.

I. The Glory of God is more advanced, and the Attributes of his Wisdom and his Justice, and of his Goodness it self are more displayed

played by leaving Men to a Freedom of acting, than they could have been by imposing an inevitable Fate and Necessity of not sinning upon Mankind. Unless Man had been left capable of sinning against God, he could not have been in a Capacity of paying him a true and proper Obedience: for Obedience supposeth Choice, and Choice supposeth a Possibility of Disobedience. To obey God in proper speaking, is to chuse to do what God has commanded, to submit to his Will, and to resolve to do what we know to be pleasing to Him, upon that very Reason and Consideration, because we know it to be His pleasure; not because the Necessity of our own Nature, or some over-ruling Power forceth us upon it. The Obedience of Rational Creatures, supposing them from their first Creation out of all possibility of sinning, would be no other, than that of the irrational and inanimate Beings, and a Man then could be no more truly said to obey God in acting as God has appointed, than a Stone may be said to obey him in falling downward, or the Fire in ascending: These act according to God's appointment, and so would Man, if he acted upon necessity; but it is an Honour and Homage due to God from Rational Creatures, that they should determine themselves to do as he has commanded, and make a free Acknowledgment of his Bounty and Goodness, and pay a voluntary Submission to the Divine

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Authority, which is their *reasonable Service*.

The Wisdom of God is and will be, especially at the Day of Judgment, more conspicuous by the Government of a wicked World, than it would have been, if all men had been forcibly kept from doing wickedly. To restrain the Passions, and over-rule all the Vices of Men, and set bounds to them; to bring Good out of Evil, and by unexpected Ways and Methods to lead Men to Repentance, and to appoint and bring to pass the whole Dispensation of the Gospel, by which the Treasures and Mysteries of the Divine Wisdom are revealed, and such things are discovered, as even the Angels themselves *desire to look into*. 1 Pet. i. 12. this magnifies the Wisdom of God much more than the State of Men incapable of Sin could have done. There is much more Wisdom shewn in governing Free Agents, than in governing by Fate and Necessity, and more Wisdom in making the worst Actions as instrumental and serviceable to the purposes of Holiness and Goodness, as the best could have been, than in not suffering them to be, and more in Redeeming Man than in keeping him by Force in such a Condition, as to stand in no need of Redemption.

All the Divine Attributes are much more magnified by the Incarnation of the Son of God for the Redemption of Man, than they could have been, if he had never fall'n: The Love of God is manifested in a more wonderful

derful manner by sending His own Son to die for us; His Justice in requiring Satisfaction, and His Wisdom, and Truth, and Faithfulness in recovering Man from his miserable Condition, and perfecting the Design of his Creation, in despite of his Disobedience.

It is the Mercy of God to save them that are saved; but his Justice is executed only upon the wicked; and why should we think it reasonable, that God should debar himself the exercise of one of his Attributes rather than punish such Men, as thro' their own Obstinacy will perish? Justice is as much a Perfection of God as Mercy is; and tho' it may seem terrible to us, yet it is as reasonable in it self, that wicked Men should perish, as that the righteous should be saved: And God acts upon Principles of infinite Reason and Wisdom, without any mixture of Passion. Therefore I demand, Is it reasonable or not, that the wicked should suffer? And if it be, why should not God act according to his own Attributes, and the true Reasons of things, rather than by our weak and fond Passions? Since there is infinite Wisdom, and Justice, and Mercy in God's Proceedings, it cannot be conceived, why the Ruine which many Men will bring upon themselves, should either alter or hinder the Divine Counsels and Decrees.

II. A freedom of Choice conduceth more to the Happiness of the Blessed, than a Necessity of not sinning could have done. The  
Happiness

Happiness of Heaven consists in the Love and Enjoyment of God; but Love is never so great; nor so sensible an Happiness, as when there has been some Tryal and Experience in the proof of it. And it must advance the Happiness both of Angels and Men in Heaven; that upon Choice and Tryal they have prefer'd God before all things, and upon that find themselves confirm'd and Established in the perpetual and unalterable Love and Enjoyment of him. This very Consideration, that they might once have fall'n from his Love, inspires them with the highest Ardors of Love, when they rejoyce in the infinite Rewards of so easy and short a Tryal: and the Reflection upon the Dangers escaped, heightens even the Joys of Heaven it self to them, and makes an Addition to every degree of Bliss. The Remembrance of their past Sins and Temptations, and the Sense of their own Unworthiness arising from that Remembrance, will continually excite in the blessed fresh Acts of Love and Adoration of God, who has raised them above all Sin and Temptation, and fixt them in an everlasting State of Bliss and Glory. The Tryal that the Righteous underwent here makes up some part of their Happiness in Heaven, and in what degree soever their Happiness can be supposed to be, yet it is in some measure encreased, and, as it were, endeared to them by reflecting upon their former State of Tryal, which they were subject to Temptation and Sin.

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The Love and Praises, and Adorations of the Father for sending his Son and accepting his Ransom of the Son, as our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost as our Guide and Conductor to Heaven, must suppose that we needed a Ransom and a Redeemer, and the Grace and Influence of the Holy Ghost; that is, we must have been capable of Sin and Misery, or else we had wanted these Motives to the Love of God, which the Dispensation of the Gospel affords, and which will make up the Happiness of Heaven to us. Creatures cannot comprehend the Divine Essence, but they know and love God, according as he manifests himself to them; and therefore that Dispensation, which doth most manifest the Love and Wisdom, and Goodness of God, doth most conduce to the Glory of God and the Happiness of Men. The Blessed shall see God *face to face*, they shall enjoy his Presence and partake of his Glory, and in this their Happiness will consist; but the Love of God is not only the necessary consequence of this Beatific Vision, but it is antecedently necessary to qualify us for it, and the more any Soul is inflamed with the Divine Love, the fuller and more perfect Vision of God we must suppose it to enjoy. But Goodness is the Object of our Love, and not Goodness in the Idea so much, as Goodness extended to us: And as God's Goodness is more manifested in sending his Son to atone  
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for our Sins, than it could have been by exempting us from all possibility of Sinning; so our Love to him must be more strongly excited, whereby the Soul is dilated, as it were, and made more receptive of the Communications of the Divine Essence in the Beatifick Vision. As Faith is *made perfect by Works* proceeding from Love in this Life, and without Charity is nothing worth; so in the other World, where Faith shall be swallowed up in Vision, Love must be that Power or Quality in the Soul, whereby we become capable of receiving the Divine Communications, and the more exteptive and boundless this is, the more happy we shall be; and therefore, whatever is most conducing to advance the Love of God in us, is the best means of our Salvation and future Happiness.

The Motives which the Christian Religion affords us, to the Praise and Love of God, will accompany us for ever to augment and improve the Happiness, even of Heaven it self, where *Charity never fails*: and it is not conceivable how the Divine Love could have been so fully manifested, and set forth to us so gloriously, if Man had never fall'n, but by representing to him the Danger of his Fall, and the gracious Design of God towards him, supposing he had fall'n. To have escaped Hell, and to find our selves in the unchangeable Possession of Salvation by the free Mercy and Goodness of God; and by the Death of his

own Son, are Thoughts which must create a new Heaven, as it were, in Heaven it self; I mean, they will enlarge our Souls to the utmost Capacities of our Natures, and fill and actuate them with such Divine Ardors of Love, as if we had been kept necessarily from all Sin, seem impossible to have been raised in us. The Angels themselves *rejoyce over one Sinner that repenteth*, and that Joy must have been wanting to them, who are of so much higher and more excellent a Nature than we are of, if there had been no Possibility either of Sin, or of Repentance. And the wonderful Dispensation of the Gospel is an eternal Subject of Praise and Adoration, an eternal Fountain of Love, and Joy, and Happiness to all the Blessed Spirits in Heaven.

The more the Divine Attributes are displayed, the more Adorable the Majesty of God will appear, and will become the greater Object of our Praise and Veneration; those that are wise and good will be made the wiser and better by it, and the happier in the Contemplation of the Divine Perfections. Now a Governour in his Laws, and in the Method and Order of his Government, has regard chiefly to the Good and Obedience, and has little Concern for the rest. And we must consider God not only as the Father, but as the Governour of Mankind; and tho' an earthly Father perhaps would by all means possible preserve his Son from incurring Punishment, yet a good

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Governour, when the Ends of his Government can be better obtain'd by leaving him to his Liberty, would not restrain him by any Force or Violence. Therefore if the Liberty of Choice in Men, and the Possibility of their Sin and Damnation be for the Glory of God, and for the Benefit of good Men, and be no Injury to the Bad; this is a sufficient Account, why man was not necessarily restrained from Sinning, tho' Damnation be the consequence of it.

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## C H A P. XIII.

### *Of the Fall of the Angels, and of our First Parents.*

**I**N the Beginning God created every thing perfect in its kind, and endued the Angels and Man with all intellectual and Moral Perfections suitable to their respective Natures: but so as to leave them capable of sinning. For it pleased the infinite Wisdom of God (for the Reasons already alledg'd, and for many more, and greater Reasons perhaps than any man is able to imagine) to place them in a State of Tryal, and to put it to their own Choice, whether they would stand in their present Condition of Innocence and Happiness,

ness, in which they were created, or fall into Sin and Misery. We have little or no Account in the Scriptures of the Cause or Temptation, which occasioned the Fall of Angels, because it doth not concern us to be acquainted with it; and therefore it little becomes us to be inquisitive about it. Indeed it is very difficult to conceive, how Beings of so Great Knowledge and Purity, as the Fall'n Angels once were of, should fall into Sin: But it must be considered, that nothing is more unaccountable than the Motives and Causes of Action in Free Agents: when any Being is at Liberty to do as it will, no other Reason besides its own Will need be enquir'd for, of its Actings. What is liable to Sin, may sin, whatever the Motive be; and to enquire after the Motive, is to enquire what Motives may determine a Free Agent, that is, an Agent, which may determine it self upon any Ground or Motive.

But how perfect and excellent soever any Creature is, unless it be so confirmed and established in a State of Purity and Holiness, as to be secured from all possibility of Sinning, it may be supposed to admire it self, and dote upon its own Perfections and Excellencies, and by degrees, to neglect and not acknowledge God the Author of them, but to sin and rebell against Him. And it is most agreeable both to Scripture and Reason, that Pride was the cause of the Fall of Angels. For those

Excellencies which might secure them from any other Sin proved a Temptation to this, and the greater their Perfections were, the greater was the Temptation; as in a Man who is guilty of Spiritual and Pharisaical Pride, all that is good and commendable in him affords him only matter for his Sin. So that where there is a freedom of Will and a possibility of Sinning, the very Perfection of Nature in a Creature may be made an Occasion to sin; and that which excludes other sins may prove a Motive and Temptation to Pride, which therefore we have reason to conclude was the Sin of the Fall'n Angels.

As to the Fall of Man, however the Thing may be disputed, the Effects of it are visible in the strange Perverseness of Humane Nature, to act against Reason and Conscience, that is, to act in plain contradiction to it self; and its own Principles. This is a State in which it cannot be supposed, that Mankind was at first created by the infinitely Good and Holy God. And the most plausible Opinion, and that which has most generally obtained among the *Heathens*, is, that the Souls of Men had a Being before they came into this World, and were sent into Human Bodies in Punishment for what they had done amiss in a precedent State. But this is mere suspicion and Conjecture without any possibility of Proof, and there is this plain Reason against it, that no man can be punished for his Amendment,  
 who

who knows nothing of it. For it is inconsistent with the Nature and end of Punishment, that the Offender should not be made sensible of his Fault, especially when the Punishment is designed for his Amendment, as it is said to be in the present Case.

If it can be supposed, that Men may possibly retain no Remembrance of what they did in another State, yet if their Faults were not kept in Memory, they should be brought to their Remembrance, if this Life were designed as a State of Punishment in order to Amendment. But the State of this Life is so far from being thought a Punishment, that Men naturally are of nothing more fond, nor dread any thing more than to leave it. And tho' Men meet with great Afflictions here, yet those do not befall those only or chiefly, who by their Proneness to Evil in this Life, might be supposed to have been the greatest Offenders in a former State, and every Calamity has not the Nature of Punishment. The Sufferings and Miseries which we endure by reason of *Adam's* Transgression are not so properly Punishments as the Effects and Consequences of his sin: But Personal Faults such as are supposed to have been committed in a State of pre-existence require a proper Punishment, and if the Punishment be for Amendment, as it is supposed to be in this present State, both the Fault and the Punishment must be known, with the Cause and End of its being

inflicted, and the greatest Offenders must undergo the severest Punishment.

The Account which the Scripture gives us of the Fall of our First Parents may be considered either, 1. in the Manner, or 2. in the Consequences of it.

1. If we consider the *Manner* of the Fall of our First Parents: 1. *Eve* was beguiled by the Serpent, and *Adam* was enticed by Her to eat the Forbidden Fruit. 2. They both eating of it, thereby fell from their State of Happiness.

1. *Eve* was beguiled by the Serpent, and *Adam* was enticed by her. It is not to be supposed, but that the Devil would use all the Means that the subtilty of his Malice could invent, to procure the Ruine of Mankind, and that therefore he would not only make use of inward Suggestions, but of outward Allurements also by a visible shape and Appearance. And if he had assumed the shape of a Man or Woman; *Eve* knew that there was none of Human Kind but *Adam* and her self in the World, and therefore that Shape was least of all proper for him to make use of. But if he had assumed any other shape, or made use of any other Creature as his Instrument, the same, or the like Objections might lie against it, that can be supposed against his beguiling *Eve* by a Serpent.

The Serpent's subtilty made him the fitter Instrument for the Devil's Purpose, for all finite Agents can act no otherwise than as the  
matter

matter they have to work withal will permit, It is supposed by a (\*) Person of great Learning, that *Eve* was tempted by a fiery flying Serpent, such as are still seen in some Parts of the World, of great brightness and Splendor, being stiled *Seraphims*: *Num. xxi.* (a) *A. Bp. Tenison of Idolatry. Chap. 14.* 6, 8. *Isai. xiv. 29.* which is a Name that denotes likewise one of the highest Orders of Angels; and he concludes that this fiery Serpent appeared to *Eve* in such a Shining and Beautiful Lustre, as she had seen Angels appear in before, and that it was mistaken by her for an Angel. This Account has great probability in it; but if it should not be admitted, yet we may observe that ordinary Serpents were generally esteemed sacred by the Heathens, as it is evident from the *Ca-* *duceus* of *Mercury*, and many other instances; the sight of them was accounted a (b) good Omen, and the (c) *Genij* were painted under the form of Serpents. It was (d) reported both of *Alexander* and *Scipio*, that they were begotten of *Jupiter* under the shape of a Serpent, and (e) *Æsculapius* is said to have assumed that form, when he was transported in the time of a great Plague from *Epidaurus* to *Rome*, (f) Serpents were had in the greatest Honour, and had Sacrifices made to them in the Worship of *Bacchus*, and a (g) Snake was portrayed round the *Tripod* of *Sibylla Erythrea*. The Story of (h) *Ophioneus* among the *Heathens* was taken from the Devils assuming

(a) *A. Bp. Tenison of Idolatry. Chap. 14.*  
(b) *Valer. Max. lib. 1. c. 6. Dio. lib. xlvii. initio Vopisc. in Aureliano Jul. cap. pit. in Maximin. jun.*  
(c) *Perf. Stat. 1. Propert. lib. iv. E. leg. 8.*  
(d) *Liv. lib. xxvi. c. 19.*  
(e) *Valer. Max. lib. 1. c. 8. Clem. Alex. Ad monit. ad Gentes. Max. Tyr. Disert. xxxviii.*  
(f) *Apud Euseb. Constant. Orat. c. 18.*  
(g) *Orig. contr. Cels. lib. 6. & Spenserii not. ad loc.*



(h) Tarnul.  
Prescript.  
37.

(k) Jof.  
Acot. lib.  
6. c. 5. 12.  
13. Maria.  
Eph. Sin.  
lib. 1. c. 4.

(l) Admo-  
nis. ad  
Gent.  
lib. 1.

(m) Lib. 5.

the Form or Body of a Serpent in his tempt-  
ing of *Eve*; and the Hereticks called (<sup>h</sup>) *Ophites* worshiped a Serpent, and to name no  
more instances, Serpents have commonly had  
Religious Worship paid them both by Antient  
and (<sup>k</sup>) Modern Heathens. And if the Devil has  
been so generally Worshiped in the Form of  
a Serpent since the Fall, it can seem no in-  
credible thing that he should by a Serpent  
deceive *Eve*. He seems to have prided him-  
self in this manner of Worship, to insult and  
trample upon fall'n Mankind, by causing him-  
self to be adored under that very form, by  
which he first wrought our Ruine; to which  
purpose *Clemens Alexandrinus* (<sup>l</sup>) observes,  
that in the Feasts of *Bacchus*, they were wont  
to cry out *Bix* meaning, as he supposes *Eve*;  
(<sup>m</sup>) *Lucretius* makes *Evan*, a Denomination of  
*Bacchus*. However it can be no impossible  
thing, that *Eve* should be deceived once by a  
Creature, by which her Posterity has been de-  
ceived, even to the Worship of it in so ma-  
ny Ages and Countries since. The Speech of  
a Serpent could be no frightful thing to  
*Eve*, who knew not what Fear was before  
her Fall; and if it be thought absurd (tho'  
it was so soon after her own Creation) that  
she should not know but that other Creatures  
might have the use of Speech as well as Man;  
Yet why might not she attribute his faculty  
of Speech to the Vertue of that Fruit, which  
he might be supposed to have tasted, and  
from

from his own Experience to recommend to her. So far is it from any Inconsistency or Improbability, that *Eve* should be beguiled by a Serpent; and when she was once deceived, it will not be denied but that *Adam* might be enticed by her.

2. The Sin committed by our First Parents was in eating the forbidden Fruit, and they both eating of it, fell thereby from their Primitive State of Happiness. The time when our First Parents sinned is uncertain, and therefore there is no ground for the Objection, which some have framed by crowding a long series of things into the Business of one day. Many Circumstances are omitted in the Scriptures concerning the State of our First Parents in Paradise, and relating to their Fall. For no more is mentioned than was needful to *Moses's* Design, which was to give a very brief Account of the most remarkable things that had past from the Creation to his own Times. It appears that our First Parents were no strangers to the Presence and Voice of God, and there is no reason to doubt but that they were fully instructed in the Terms proposed to them, with the Reasonableness of God's Commandments, how much depended upon their Obedience, what danger they were in, and how easily they might escape it, and become enstated in Everlasting Innocence and Happiness.

God had determined to make Tryal of them  
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by purposing an easy instance of their Obedience, and by forbidding them the use of but one Tree in Paradise: It was but a small restraint, and they had Ability enough to have overcome the greatest Temptation, and Life, and Death were set before them, as the Reward or Punishment of their Obedience or Disobedience, upon eating the forbidden Fruit, they must *surely die*; but if they had but refrained from it, another Tree was provided, the eating of which should as certainly have made them Immortal, as this made them subject to Death: For then without ever undergoing Death, they should have been translated to a State of more perfect Bliss and Happiness.

It cannot be deny'd, but that it was very fitting and reasonable, that God should lay some Restraint upon our First parents, whereby he might be obeyed, and his Sovereignty acknowledg'd: And as no Law could be more easily observ'd than this, so it was most proper for the place in which they were, and for their manner of Life and State of Innocence. The common Rules and Laws of Morality could then scarce have any place, but it was requisite that this or some such other Instance of Obedience, should be imposed. Theft, and Murder, and Adultery, and other Sins against Moral Duties were then either impossible to be committed, or so unnatural, that it can hardly be imagined, how any of them

them should be committed, when there were yet but two Persons in the World, in a State of perfect Innocence: and therefore in Moral Duties there could be no Tryal of the Obedience of our First parents; besides, these were so well known to them, that there could be no need of any Command concerning them. But God gives them a Command in a Thing of an indifferent Nature, that so he might have a plainer proof of their Obedience, in a thing which was both indifferent of it self, and so easy to them, that nothing but a careless and perverse Neglect could betray them into Disobedience.\* To suppose Good and Evil to be in the Nature of Things only, and not in the Commandments and Prohibitions of God, is in effect, a renouncing of God's Authority; but this Tree was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: For it made them sensible of the Divine Authority upon which Moral Good and Evil formally depend, tho' materially they be in the Nature of Things: Whatever God is pleased to command or forbid, however indifferent it be in it self, is for that very Reason, so far as it is commanded or forbidden by him, as truly Good or Evil, as if it were absolutely and morally so, being enacted by the same Divine Authority, whereby all Moral Precepts become obligatory as Laws to us; For all Moral Truths, or Precepts, or Rules of Life, however certain and necessary in themselves,  
yet

yet receive the Obligation of Laws from the Divine Authority, this being the most certain Truth in Morality, and in order of Nature antecedent to all others, that God is to be obeyed in all that he commands or forbids. But the Divine Authority was solely and purely concern'd in this Commandment, which had no foundation in the Nature of Things, but depended meerly upon the Will and Pleasure of God, and by the Transgression of this Law, it became notorious to our First parents and their unhappy Posterity, that both Good and Evil, whatever they may be in Speculation and abstracted Notions, yet as they concern us in the Practice of our Lives, are to be resolv'd ultimately into the Divine Authority; God is our Lawgiver, and nothing can be a Law to us but by His enacting, and what he enacts must be a Law to us; and of the same necessary indispensible Obligation, so far as he is pleased to enjoin it, whether it be a Moral Precept, or only an indifferent Thing in its own Nature. It seems then that God was pleased to manifest his Sovereign Authority in this Commandment, and to shew that it is absolute and independant upon Moral Good or Evil; and that tho' his infinite Holiness and Goodness would not permit him to Command any thing contrary to Moral Duties, nor suffer him not to command Moral Good, and forbid Moral Evil; yet his Authority is arbitrary over us, extending as far beyond all the Duties of

of Morality as he pleases, which indeed are only Truths and Precepts, but not Duties to us but by Vertue of his Authority. This Commandment therefore was given in Assertion of God's Authority, whom it is always and in every thing good to obey, and evil to disobey, as our First parents found by sad Experience.

(<sup>n</sup>) *Maimonides* observes, that they had the Knowledge of Truth and Falshood before, but Good and Evil became known to them by their Fall, whereby they understood the Value of that Good which they had lost, and were made sensible of the Misery of that Condition, into which they had brought themselves: They perceived how good it was to obey God, and how evil to be disobedient to Him in any thing whatsoever.

(n) *Maim.  
More Ne-  
vorb Pars  
1. c. 2.*

(<sup>o</sup>) *Mr. Mede* has observed that their Sin was Sacrilege. God had reserved that Tree as holy to himself in Token of his Dominion and Sovereignty, and appointed it to such uses as he had designed it for: and therefore it was a Sacrilegious Prophanation to eat of it; it was a Theft or Robbery, no less than the *Robbing of God*, as the Prophet styles Sacrilege, and an Invasion of his Right. *And the Lord God said, Behold the Man is become as one of us to know Good and Evil.* Gen. iii. 22. which words are generally supposed to have been spoken by a severe *Sarcasm*, or with an upbraiding Anger and Indignation; but they seem to admit of an easier Sense, if they be thus interpreted;

(o) *Lib. 2.  
Disc. xxvii.*

*The*



*The man is become as one of us*, he has made himself as one of us; he has assumed to himself an equality with us. Christ *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*. Phil. ii. 6. to be equal is there to claim an Equality; and so to *become as one of us*, is to challenge or pretend to become as one of us, according to the Devil's Suggestion. Christ knew it to be no Injury or Presumption in Himself, who was *in the Form of God*, and was God as well as Man, to assume to Himself an Equality with the Father: But our First Parents, who were made *in the Image of God* and *after his Likeness*, were not contented with this, but affected something higher than the Perfections of a Creature, and aim'd at an independant State of Wisdom and Immortality, being seduced by the Serpent, who said unto the Woman, *Ye shall not surely die, ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil*. Gen. iii. 4, 5. This was a most heinous Crime to believe the Serpent rather than God Himself, and to be seduced by him, and hope by his Advice to procure to themselves Divine Wisdom and Immortal Happiness.

II. The Consequences of the Fall of our First Parents were answerable to their Crime, and were either upon themselves, or upon their Posterity, or upon the Serpent and other Creatures.

I. The Curse upon the Serpent was by a visible Object and Representation, to denote that Curse and Punishment which was denounced

nounced against the Tempter himself, who assumed the Body of a Serpent. The Serpent before had a freer and stronger Motion, and could lift up himself and reach the Fruits of the Trees, but is since confined to the Ground; and is forced to seek his Food in the Dust, And there being Relations of Serpents, which carry Part of their Body erect, this before the Curse might belong to the whole Kind of them in another manner, than it doth since to any one Sort. The Basilisk is said to go with his Head and Breast erect, and a Serpent call'd (p) in *Ceylon*, the *Noya*, will stand with half his Body upright for two or three hours together. (q) These may be for Monuments of the Truth of the Curse upon the rest; as some of the Race of the Giants were left in the Land of *Canaan*, till *David's* time, as a Memorial to the *Israelites* of the Miraculous Power of God in the Conquest of the Land by their Forefathers.

(p) Kne-  
xe's Hist. of  
*Ceyl.* Part  
I. c. 7.  
(q) See  
*Mr. Mele  
lib. 1. Dis.  
xli.*

The Curse of the Ground was for a Punishment to *Adam* and his Posterity, and can be considered no otherwise, nor be made matter of Objection, unless it be thought unreasonable to inflict a Curse upon Mankind for this Offence of eating the Forbidden Fruit; by making the Earth less fruitful and pleasant to them. Tho' the Garden of *Eden* were the most delightful and happy Part of the Earth, yet the whole Earth before the Fall was very different from what it has been since. For if it had

had continued as it was, the Curse and Punishment upon Mankind could not have been effected in that manner, in which it was determined.

2. Our First Parents were turned out of Paradise, and not suffered to taste of the Tree of Life. They had been charged not to eat of the Fruit in the midst of the Garden, and Threatned with Death, that is, that they should become Mortal, and be sure to die, if they would presume to eat of it. To be subject to Misery both in Body and Mind, so that the Body should decay, and at last be dissolved, and the Soul which could not Perish should be miserable after its separation from the Body, was the Original Notion of Death; and our First Parents, who had never seen what Natural dying was, understood Death no otherwise than as a Privation of Happiness, and consequently a State of Misery both in this Life and the next: The first was unavoidable, the latter to be avoided by Repentance, and a future Obedience thro' Faith in God's Mercy for Christ's sake.

They were hindered from tasting of that Tree which was to have been the Means and Instrument of Immortality to them. For God who has given a Medicinal Vertue and a Power of Nourishment to other Fruits and Herbs, might convey a Power and Influence into this Tree, of rendring Men Immortal by preventing the decays of Nature, and Nourishing or Strengthen-  
then.

thing them to an endless Life. How this should have been, we are now no more able to know than to become immortal here upon Earth: But this was God's Decree, that Immortality should be annexed to the tasting of that Tree, and therefore our First Parents, when they had incurred the Penalty of Death, were not suffered to taste of it, but were forced out of Paradise, and it was just that they should be hindered from enjoying any longer the Delights of Paradise, for the Transgression of a Commandment, which wantonness only and a vain and criminal Curiosity, could make them disobey.

We are able to give little more Account, how the Food we now eat, can nourish and sustain us from time to time for Threescore and Ten, or Fourscore Years, than how the Fruit of the Tree of Life, should have been a preservative to keep Men alive for ever; only this we have the Experience of, and so fancy we can tell, how it comes to pass; but that is strange to us: and what is strange, Men wonder at, and will hardly believe it. But since God has endued our ordinary Food with a power of Nourishment, no man can reasonably doubt but that he might endue this Fruit with such a Virtue, that it should have made men immortal to Taste of it, and have prevented that decay of Nature, which now still creeps upon us in the use of other Food. We may well suppose, that if they had once tasted of this Fruit,  
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they should have suffered no Decay, but have lived in constant Vigour here, tho' partaking afterwards only of other Nourishment, till they had been translated to Heaven. Or it might be design'd not as a Physical, but a Sacramental Cause of Immortality, that is, as a Sign and Pledge of Immortality, God having decreed that upon the Tasting of this Fruit, *Adam* and his Posterity should have been immortal. But the Forbidden Fruit being of a most delicious Taste, as well as pleasant to the *Eyes*, and containing a very fermenting Juice, might put the Blood and Spirits into great Disorder, and thereby divest the Soul of that Power and Dominion which it had before over the Body, and by a closer and more intimate Union with Matter, might reduce it to that miserable Condition, which has been propagated and derived down to Posterity with the Humane Nature from our First Parents; as some Poysons now strangely affect the Nerves and Spirits, without causing immediate Death, but make such Alterations in the Body, as are never to be cured. And it could not be fitting that Man should become immortal in this Condition, or that the Threatning of God, however, should not take place.

From what has been hitherto said upon this Subject, I hope it is evident, that there can be no necessity of running to Allegorical Interpretations to explain the Fall of our First Parents. And indeed all the Reason that can  
be

be given, why it is represented under an Allegory, will rather prove the Litteral Sense. For if the Simplicity, and the Customs, and Manner of Life in the Beginning of the World did require, that the Fall of our First parents should be describ'd under an Allegory of this Nature; for the very same Reasons we may suppose that the Fall was in this manner. For what is it which makes it seem improbable, but only its being disagreeable, as some Men conceit; to Reason? But if it be absurd to suppose that such a thing should have been in the Beginning of the World, why is it not as absurd that such a thing should be represented to those, who liv'd at the beginning of the World, as if it had been? If this was then the most fitting and proper Representation of the Fall, why was it not the most likely manner for it to happen by? God's Dispensations are always fitted to the Capacities and Circumstances of those, who are most concern'd in them, and the Devil in his Temptations applies himself to the Circumstances of those, whom he would seduce. And it cannot be conceiv'd, that the most remarkable Thing that ever has befalln Mankind (except the Redemption of the World by Christ) should so come to pass, as not to be told to Posterity, but in an Allegory. For if the Litteral Truth had ever been known, it was impossible it should be forgotten, in so few Generations, and that *Moses* should put an Allegory in the room of it. Did the Children of *Israel* know the Historical Truth of the Fall,



or did they not know it? If they did, why should *Moses* disguise it under an Allegory, rather than the rest of the Book of *Genesis*? If they did not know it, how could it be forgotten in so few Generations of Men, supposing it had ever been known to *Adam's* Posterity? If it were never known, but the Relation of it were always conveyed down in *Metaphor* and *Allegory*, then this *Allegory* must pass for Historical Truth in those Ages; and the Reason why it was delivered to them in *Allegory* must be, because that manner of delivering it, was most suitable to that Age, and most credible, and every way most proper; and if it were most fitting that it should be thought to have happened so, this is a good Argument that it did really happen so, since there is nothing hinders, but it might so have happened, and it was most probable at least to the first Ages of the World, that it did so come to pass, or else it would not have been requisite to relate it in this manner.

3. The Fall of our First Parents brought a Curse upon their Posterity. And here it must be acknowledged, that God may bestow his infinite Grace and Mercies upon what Terms he pleaseth, and therefore he might ordain, that the Happiness or Unhappiness of their Posterity should depend upon the Obedience or Disobedience of our First Parents.

(1.) God might ordain that the Condition of their Posterity in this World should depend upon

upon it, so that they should have been immortal upon their Obedience, and should become mortal upon their Disobedience; that they should be made subject to Cares and Labours, to Diseases and Dangers by reason of the Fall of our First Parents, from which, otherwise they should have been exempt. This is esteem'd just in all Governments amongst Men, that Children should be reduced to Poverty and Disgrace by the Fault of their Parents, from whom Riches and Honour were to have descended upon them: And this way of Proceeding is just, both in Humane Laws and in the Dispensations of Providence; because God and our Country have an antecedent Right and Interest in us, superior to any Man's private Title or Welfare; and this they may justly make use of to restrain Men from those Crimes, out of Love and Concern for their Posterity, from which no consideration of themselves could have withheld them. The Experience of the World has found this to be the most effectual Remedy with many Men, and therefore the wisest and justest Governments have made use of it, and the most wise and just God might think fit to deal in this manner with our First Parents, by representing to them, that the Happiness or Misery of their Posterity depended upon their Good or ill Behaviour in this one Instance of their Duty. We daily see that Children commonly inherit the Diseases of their Parents, and an

## The Reasonableness and Certainty

extravagant and vicious Father leaves his Son Heir to nothing but the Name and Shadow perhaps of a Great Family, with an infirm and sickly Constitution, and little or nothing to support and relieve it. Now if these Miseries and Calamities had been entail'd upon all the Race of Mankind from *Adam*, the thing would have been the same in the Nature and Justice of it (for Numbers cannot alter the Nature of Things) as it is now, when they descend upon some, only from their immediate Parents. And therefore it must be much rather just, that the Fall of our First Parents should make their whole Race only *liable* to such Calamities, but not involve All necessarily in them.

(2.) The Communications of God's Grace, and the Favours and Blessings of his more immediate Presence, might depend upon the Behaviour of the First Parents of Mankind. He might send them out of Paradise, and might withdraw his free and usual Communications of himself from them and their Posterity, upon this Forfeiture, by their Disobedience.

3. The Proneness which we cannot but observe in our selves to Sin might proceed from hence. We daily see and feel the corruption of our Nature, by whatsoever means we became subject to it. So that it is in vain to object, that it would be unjust that all Mankind should be involv'd in *Adam's* Sin. For the Condition which we are in, is matter of Fact,  
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of which no man doth or can doubt: The Question is only, how we come into this Condition; and since we are born in it; and it is our Natural and Hereditary evil, the Justice and Goodness of God is cleared and vindicated, by assigning a Cause for it; from the Imputations of such as must acknowledge the same corruption of Nature, but will allow no Cause or Reason for it, except the arbitrary Will and Pleasure of the Creator. The Children of vicious Parents are generally most inclin'd to Vice, and if Men may partake of the evil Dispositions and Inclinations of their more immediate Parents, why might not the Corruption of the Humane Nature in our First Parents descend upon all their Posterity?

(4.) The Happiness of Men in the next Life might depend upon the Obedience of our First Parents. For when God proposed to bestow upon Men Rewards of Glory and Happiness, which far surpass any Pretences of Desert or Claim of Right, that they in a State of Righteousness and Innocency could have been able to make, since the Promises were so great and the Happiness so far exceeding any thing to which Men could pretend a Right; we must be very unreasonable, unless we will confess that God might bestow his own Gifts upon his own Terms: He might therefore debar Men from Heaven upon the Transgression of our First Parents, because the Promise of Heaven was an act

of his free Bounty. For no Man can pretend that an Innocent Creature which preserves its Integrity, must, for that Reason, be advanced to the unspeakable Joys of Heaven. No Creature can be *profitable* to his Maker, and an *unprofitable Servant* can merit no such Reward. And what God was not obliged to bestow, tho' Men continued in the State of Innocency, he might with all the Justice and Reason in the World refuse, when Men became divested of their Innocency, and thereby forfeited all pretences to that Happiness which was promised upon condition, that our First Parents had continued in their Primitive and Original State of Righteousness.

(5.) God might ordain that all Men should become liable to Eternal Misery by the Fall of our First Parents, and that those who would not accept of Means appointed of Salvation by Faith in Christ, to rescue them from it, should perish eternally. We no sooner read of the Fall of Man, but Christ is forthwith promised, even before the Curse was denounced upon *Adam* and *Eve* for their Offence; the Seed of the Woman is immediately promised to bruise the Serpents Head, and afterwards the Judgment is denounced, first upon *Eve* and then upon *Adam* for their Transgression; and the Seed of the Womans bruising the Serpent's Head, is to be understood of Victory over our Spiritual Enemies, and that Conquest which should be obtained over  
Death

Death and Hell by Christ. For the Temporal Punishment which was to befall *Adam* and *Eve* and their Posterity, is afterwards added, and therefore this Promise cannot be understood of a Deliverance from that, but from the wrath of God, and of Redemption from Sin upon Repentance under whatever condition of this Life.

The Consequence of the Sin of our First Parents is to entail Grief, and Trouble, and Labour, and Pain upon their Posterity, and a frail and infirm Nature, exposed to Temptations, and destitute of the Aids of Grace, and the presence of God in their Hearts, incapable of Heaven, and in no capacity of avoiding Hell without Christ's Merits. But Christ was at that very time promised to take away all the Curse and Vengeance consequent upon the Transgression of our First Parents, nay, his Death was pre-ordained and determined beforehand. For Christ is *the Lamb Slain from the Foundation of the World*, Rev. xiii. 8. *Who verily was fore-ordained before the Foundation of the World*. 1 Pet. i. 20. He was Slain in the determinate Counsel, and fore-knowledge of God, even before the Fall of our First Parents came to pass: the whole Scheme and Design of Man's Salvation was laid from all Eternity in God's Counsel and Decree, he foresaw that Man would fall, and he determined to send his Son to redeem him, and this he had determined to do so long before



fore the Fall of Man, even by an eternal Decree. So that the Goodness and Wisdom of God had effectually provided against the ill consequences, to the Salvation of Mankind by the Fall in all that obey him; and made it impossible that *Adam's* Posterity should become eternally Miserable, and Tormented in Hell Fire, but through their own Fault. For tho' we learn from the Scriptures, that Infants are *by Nature born in Sin, and the Children of Wrath*, yet, whatever the Effects of that Wrath may be, we have no Ground to conclude, that any one shall be condemned, to the Flames and Pains of Hell, without his own Personal and Actual Guilt. The Redemption of the World by Christ was decreed from Eternity, and was actually promised before any Child of *Adam* was born, and even before the Curse was denounced upon our First Parents, and a Remedy was from the beginning provided against all that Misery, which was brought upon Mankind by their Transgression.

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## CHAP. XIV.

### *Of the Eternity of Hell Torments.*

**T**Here is nothing in Religion which has been thought by many, more liable to  
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Objections than the Eternity of Hell Torments: And yet I shall undertake to prove that they are plainly consistent, not only with the Justice, but with the Equity and Mercy of God.

I. I shall prove the Eternity of Hell Torments to be consistent with the Justice of God from these Arguments. 1. Because both Rewards and Punishments are alike proposed to our Choice. 2. Because the Rewards are Eternal as well as the Punishments. 3. Because it was necessary that the Sanction of the Divine Laws should be by Eternal Rewards and Punishments. (4) Because it is necessary that Eternal Punishments should be inflicted upon the Wicked, according to this Sanction.

1. Both Rewards and Punishments are alike proposed to our Choice. It is certainly consistent with Infinite Justice, to set before Men Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing, and then to deal with them according to their own Choice. And none will fall into a State of Everlasting Misery, but such as shall be convinced in their own Consciences of the Justice of God's Proceedings with them: And this conviction will prove one great part of their Punishment, when they shall consider that they Perish only by their own Fault, that they were wilful and obstinate to their own Ruine; that no Promises, no Threats

Threats could reclaim them. And this is all that the strictest Justice can require, to deal with Men according to their own Choice, to let them chuse their own Condition of Happiness or Misery, and to proceed in such a manner with Sinners, as that they shall be convinced themselves that there is no Injustice done them.

2. The Rewards are Eternal as well as the Punishments. If the Rewards on the one hand had not born a just proportion to the Punishments on the other, the Cause had been different, and it had seemed hard to suffer Eternal Torments for a short Life of Sin, if there had not been Eternal Happiness proposed to as short a Life of Virtue and Righteousness. But since the Rewards and the Punishments are equal, it is not necessary that there should be an exact proportion between the Offence and the Punishment considered in it self, and without respect had to the Rewards; because the Reward being Eternal, answers the opposite Punishment on the other Part. Thus Men are wont to set so much Loss against so much Gain; and no Man pities him that might have gained as much as he has lost, if it had not been his own Fault, tho' the loss be never so great, and depended upon never so small and short a Tryal.

It may seem an hard Case, that a Man should lose his Life for but going out of a City,

City, when he could do no hurt by it, nor intended to do any: and this was the Case of *Shimei*; but he had forfeited his Life before to *David*, who had spar'd; and he had been afterwards engag'd, it seems, in other ill Practices, and had probably been concern'd with *Joab* and others in setting up *Adonijah*, (for it was another *Shimei*, the Son of *Elab*, of whom it is said, that he was not with *Adonijah*. *1 Kings* i. 8. iv. 18.) and *David* gives *Solomon* the same Direction concerning these two Men, *1 Kings* ii. 5, 8. *Solomon* therefore sets him this Condition, and he was to expect to live upon no other Terms, but his keeping within these Bounds, which by the Confession of *Shimei* himself was a good saying. *1 Kings* ii. 38. that is, he was glad of it, and could expect no kinder Usage. And if *Solomon* had proposed some great Reward to him, upon Condition, that he had kept within the City, he had been not only just, but very gracious and bountiful to him in it. I am confident any condemn'd Malefactor would think so. The Case of Mankind is like this, but infinitely more gracious on God's part, and more provoking on ours. The very best of us were in Sin, and have often forfeited our Salvation to the Divine Justice; and God by his Sovereign Power and Authority over us might have proposed any Terms of Reconciliation: But he has been pleased to appoint, that our everlasting State of Happiness or  
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Misery should depend upon the Moral Terms of Vertue and Vice; and to set everlasting Happiness against everlasting Misery; and no man shall be sentenced to Hell Torments; but he might have been as happy as he shall find himself to be miserable:

Both the (\*) *Jews* and (C) *Heathens* had a Notion of eternal Rewards and Punishments; as well as *Christians*; and the eternity of the latter was the great Impediment, which *Epicurus* endeavour'd to remove out of the way; to the free Enjoyment of Men's Lusts. For whatever some have said in behalf of *Epicurus*, his own word produced (\*) by *Tully*, too plain to be evaded, shew, that he did place all Happiness in sensual Pleasures; only he was willing to enjoy them as quietly and securely as he could; and for this Reason laid down divers Rules by way of expedient to keep the Mind in Peace, void of all Auxierity in this Life, and of all Hopes or Fears of a future State: The prevailing Belief of the eternal Punishments of wicked Men after Death was enough to ruine all his Philosophy; and therefore this was by all means to be removed, which yet he was never able to effect. So that this was a thing sufficiently known to make all men sensible of what they must expect would be the consequence of Sin. And what God has threatned so long before, and has given Men time, and Opportunity, and Ability to avoid, they cannot fall under, but thro' their own Wilfulness and Misbehaviour; and

(a) *Isa.*  
xxxiii. 14.  
lxvi. 24.  
*Dan.* xii.  
2.

(b) *Plat.*  
in *Pheed.*  
*Lucret.* lib.  
i. v. 112.  
*Diog. La-*  
*ert.* in *Py-*  
*thag. Cels.*  
*Hist. Na-*  
*vitat.* in  
*Br. fil.* c.  
16. *Lerij*  
apud *Ori-*  
*gin.* l. viii.  
*Abr. Ro-*  
*ger de la*  
*vie & des*  
*Moeurs*  
*des Bre-*  
*mines.* c.  
21.

(x) *Tusc.*  
*Qu.* lib. iii.

can have no reason to complain, when it comes upon them.

3. It was necessary that the Sanction of the Divine Laws should be by eternal Rewards and Punishments. The Sanction of all Laws is by Rewards and Punishments, and the Design of appointing Punishments is to affright Men from Sin, as the end of Rewards is to invite them to Obedience. The only true Measure and just Proportion therefore between the Crime and the Punishment, is the suitableness of the Punishment to enforce Obedience to the Law, and cause it to be duly observed. For if the Law be good and necessary, and cannot be so well and so effectually obeyed without a very severe Punishment to enforce it; the Severity of the Punishment is so far from Cruelty, that it is a just and wise Provision to secure Obedience to the Law, and procure all the Good design'd by it. Thus we always judge in Humane Laws: A man is condemn'd to lose his Life for taking from another that, which he perhaps could very well spare; but we are all agreed in the Justice of making such Examples, because we find that Men can scarce be secure in their Lives and Estates, notwithstanding the Severity of such Laws. And if the Terrors of everlasting Torments will not frighten Men from Sin, what effect would a less Punishment denounced have had upon them? If men can but once perswade themselves that the Torments of Hell are not so terrible, they freely



ly give themselves up to all Licentiousness; and we know how fond Men of wicked Lives are of such Doctrines. God therefore perfectly understanding the Temper and Inclination, the Stubbornness and Perverseness of Mens Hearts, so prone to Vice, and so backward to all that is good; foresaw that a less Punishment threatened would not prevail with Men to forsake their Sins, and get to Heaven.

And with what Face can that Man object that the Torments of Hell are too great and intolerable, who, as terrible as they are, lives still secure and undisturb'd in his Sins? If they are so great that he complains of them, as unjust, Why doth he not leave his Sins? If he doth not forsake his Sins, they are not too great, since they have not attained that End upon him, for which the Punishment is denounced, *viz.* his Repentance and Amendment of Life. But if he doth not believe their Eternity, and therefore continues in his Sins, this shews, how necessary the Denouncing, and how necessary the Belief of eternal Punishments is. *Out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked Servant: Thou knewest that I was an austere Man, wherefore then didst thou not do as thou wast commanded?*

It is necessary, that eternal Punishments should be inflicted upon the Wicked according to the Sanction of the Divine Laws by eternal Rewards and Punishments. We find by sad Experience, how little effect the Pu-

nishments now threatned have upon too many Men, and if they were less dreadful they would be so much the less regarded. So that it appears, that the appointment of eternal Punishments was but necessary to keep Men from Sin, and what God's Wisdom saw necessary, to appoint, his Justice and Truth will make it necessary for him to inflict: For what he has so often and so solemnly declared, he can never depart from, but will certainly execute it. The Promises and Threatnings relating this Life are conditional; and are expressly declared to be so, *Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.* because in this Life Men are changeable from Good to Bad; or from Bad to Good; but the Threatnings as well as the Promises concerning the other Life must be absolute and unconditional, because they relate to an unchangeable final State; which will admit of no alteration either in the Wicked or the Righteous. It is not therefore because God can recede from his Threatnings rather than from his Promises; that *Nineveh* was spared, but because all Threatnings belonging to the State of this Life imply a condition of Repentance, upon which they are not to be inflicted, as *Jonah* and the *Ninevites* themselves well understood: but then all Promises too, which concern this Life are under the like condition, and are not to be performed upon the Disobedience of those, to whom they are made, as we are assured by God's express Declaration. But

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what is threatned or promised to Men to befall them after this Life, is promised or threatned to befall them, when they shall be in a fixt unalterable State, and therefore must be incapable of any Condition or Reserve to be implied in it. For when Men continue the same they were at the time when God's Promises and Threatnings were declared to them; his Promises and Threatnings always take place in this World according to the full extent and importance of the Words in which they were delivered; and therefore they must thus take place in the next World, into which, when Men are once entred, they must for ever continue equally fit Objects either of the Divine Promises or Threatnings, as they were at the time of their Death. The Point is, that God never changes, but Men are changeable in this Life; and both his Promises and Threatnings, which concern Men here, suppose them such, and therefore *Rewards* are with-held, or Punishments remitted in this World, as Men fall into Wickedness, or become reclaim'd from it. But in the other World, where the State of Men is unalterable from good or bad, vertuous or vicious, both the Promises and Threatnings of God must be punctually fulfilled, and can admit of no Condition or Reservation. God has sworn that those, who will not believe and obey him, shall not enter into his Rest. Heb. iii. 18. and what he has once sworn is irrevocable. *Heb.*

vi. 17. *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.* 2 Tim. ii. 13. And it is not only *threatned* that the Wicked shall suffer eternal Punishment, but it is likewise expressly *foretold*, that the wicked shall be sentenced to *everlasting fire* at the Day of Judgment, and that they *shall go away into everlasting Punishment.* Matth. xxv. 41, 46. To leave no room for hopes of any End or Abatement of the Punishment, we have our Saviour's express Declaration, that the Sentence shall be past according to the Threatning, and that the everlasting Punishment which is threatned, shall be certainly executed upon the wicked. Our Judge has beforehand declar'd, what Sentence he will pass; the Terms whereof are therefore as unalterable, as if it were already pronounc'd. He has declared that the Punishments of the wicked, as well as the Rewards of the righteous shall be eternal, as directly and positively as he has said any thing else relating to the last Judgment, or concerning any other part of his Gospel, and we have as little reason to imagine that his express and repeated Affirmation is capable of a reserved Meaning in this particular, as in any other matter whatsoever.

Some of the Benefits and Advantages which are consequent to the Punishments of this World are precedent to those of the next: Here Men are punished for their own Amendment; or for the Advantage and Security of others

others or for both: In the next World the actual inflicting of Punishments is not for these ends, but they were threatned for these, and they must be inflicted when they have been once threatned and declared by God, who cannot lye. It is for the Repentance of Sinners, and for the Benefit of Good Men in preserving them in the ways of Vertue, and securing them from the Pride and Malice of the Wicked that Hell should be threatned; but because it is the final and eternal State of the Wicked, it cannot be for their Amendment after the Execution of its Torments upon them, and Good Men being once out of the Power of Temptations, and placed beyond the Malice of the Wicked, can no longer have any Protection or Advantage from the Punishments denounced against impenitent Sinners; but whether the Advantages arising from Punishments be before or after the inflicting of Punishments, there is the same necessity for the appointing, and consequently for the inflicting them, *viz.* The Good of Mankind in keeping Men from Sin, and leaving those without excuse who will not be restrained from it, and work out their own Salvation. But another end of Punishment is, that Satisfaction for the violation of the Laws may be made to the supreme Authority which is despised and affronted by it: And the vindication of God's Honour and Authority, and of his Truth and Holiness in his Hatred and De-

Detestation of Sin, and his indignation against Sinners, is manifested by the actual Punishments of the Damned, and it would be an Argument of the contrary to all this, if they were threatned and not inflicted.

And the Number of Persons to be thus Punished doth not alter the Case, but only shews that many are concerned in it; and if the case be the same, the Justice must be the same too, tho' the Persons be never so many upon whom it is executed. That which is Just towards one, or Merciful towards one, is Just or Merciful towards never so many Thousands. For Justice and Mercy consist in the Nature of things, not in the greater or lesser Number of Persons to whom they are extended. And tho' Multitudes of Criminals are apt to move compassion in Men; yet this proceeds partly from the Sympathy and Frailty of Human Nature, which is mightily swayed by Number and Multitude to do either Good or Evil; partly from the Nature of Human Affairs: For to destroy Multitudes would depopulate Cities and Countries, and would be an Affliction to Multitudes of Innocent Persons, their Friends and Relations. But it is not so in the present Case; there will be no want of Numbers in Heaven, and the Righteous shall be Everlastingly happy, and shall perceive no diminution of their Happiness by reason of the Damnation of such as were never so dear to them in this World.



And Mercy and Pity is not a Passion in God as it is in Men, but a Perfection, it is the highest Reason and Equity; and therefore tho' the Misery of Sinners be never so severe, and the number of the Miserable never so great; yet when the Equity and reasonableness of the case doth not require it, there is nothing to move God for their Relief, because he acts by the standing Rules of Reason and Wisdom, not by any Fondness and Weakness of Passion.

2. I come now to shew the Mercy of God in his inflicting Eternal Torments upon Sinners. Strict Justice has a severe Aspect, and it may seem hard for frail Man to abide the Sentence, that he may in strictness of Justice deserve. But from the Justice of God it is natural for us to appeal to his Mercy, and thither he allows us to appeal, but not so, as to expect that he should be so merciful as not to be just, or should forget that he is the Supreme Governour of the World, whilst he extends his Mercy to the Offending and Criminal part of it. Punishment is necessary to all Government, and God as Governour of the World must inflict Punishments, and what these are to be, it belongs to his Sovereign Wisdom to appoint.

And Eternal Torments were appointed for the Punishment of Sin, not only out of a very just, but even out of a gracious Design, because nothing less than the Threatnings of them would

would keep Men from Sin, and from that Mi-  
 sery which is the unavoidable consequence of  
 it, and so bring them to Heaven. It is an  
 Antient and true Observation which (c) St. *Chry-*  
*Chrysoſtom* has made, that there is Mercy e- *ad Stagir.*  
 ven in the threats of Eternal Vengeance, *lib. 1. Tom.*  
 because nothing less could have brought ma- *6. Sav. R.*  
 ny Men to Heaven. For there is no doubt  
 to be made but many will be there, who shall  
 have cause to thank God for this, as the thing  
 which first opened their Eyes, and moved  
 them to Repentance, and thereby brought  
 them to Bliss and Glory. And the same Mer-  
 cy was extended to those that Perish, and  
 would not make the same use of it, which if  
 they had done they had never perished: Tho'  
 Heaven and Hell (d) says St. *Chrysoſtom*, be  
 contrary to each other, yet they both aim at *(d) Chryſ.*  
 the same end, the Salvation of Mankind, the *ad Pop. An-*  
 Joys of Heaven invite Men to it, and the *tioc. de*  
 Fear of Hell forces those to Heaven, who *Status*  
 otherwise would be regardless of their own *Hom. 7.*  
 Happiness.

God has used the most proper and prevail-  
 ing Means to convince Sinners of their Dan-  
 ger, and to persuade them to escape it, and  
 obtain Salvation. We have everlasting Re-  
 wards and everlasting Punishments proposed  
 to our Choice; We are exhorted with the  
 greatest Earnestness, and mov'd and assisted  
 with the continual Influences and Aids of  
 Grace, to avoid the Punishments, and are as

earnestly invited, and as sufficiently enabled to obtain the Rewards. *God hath no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live;* as he solemnly and with an Oath declares by his Prophet, *Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.* It is His principal Intention and Desire, that all Men should be saved: He has proclaimed Himself to be *the Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, and Transgression, and Sin;* but then it is added, that he *will by no means clear the guilty,* that is, the obstinate and impenitent Sinner. *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* He exhorts, he invites, he promises, he threatens; he promises eternal Happiness, and threatens eternal Misery, to give all the Discouragement to Vice, and all the Enducement to Religion and Vertue which is possible. Last of all, he has sent his Son to instruct us in our Duty, and to confirm all this to us, and to purchase our Redemption with his own Blood.

God deals with Men in the plainest and most condescending manner, He lays their Duty before them with the Rewards and Punishments annex'd, and both eternal, the better to secure them in their Obedience, and force them to be happy: and then he takes Men at no Advantage, but makes all reasonable Allowances, in consideration of the frailty of Humane Nature, and in condescension to their

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Infirmities; He exacts not absolute Perfection, nor any impossible Obedience, but requires, that, tho' we cannot live without Sin, yet we should not sin wilfully and obstinately; that we should not allow and indulge our selves in Sin, and should repent if we have done so; He requires a faithful and sincere Diligence in all the Parts of our Duty, which is no more than what every Father and Master expects from his Children and Servants: When Men have sinned, God admits of their Repentance, and if after Repentance they sin again, yet still they shall be accepted upon a renew'd Repentance: nay, after a long course of Sin, a sincere Repentance may reconcile them to God, and no Repentance can be too late, that is sincere. It is extreamly dangerous indeed to defer our Repentance for one Moment, because our Lives are so uncertain, and we may provoke God to that degree, that he will no longer afford us an Opportunity to repent, nor bestow that Grace upon us, which is necessary to Repentance. But this is after repeated Provocations, and an obstinate rejecting of the Goodness of God, which leads Men to repentance: And these are the Terms of the Gospel, that *when the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive.* There is Great Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, and the returning Prodigal is received with the greatest Favour

*The Reasonableness and Certainty*

your and Tenderness. If we will be obedient, we have the Assistance of God's Grace, and if we have done amiss, yet His grace is offered us to bring us to Repentance, and we may be pardoned upon sincere Resolutions of Obedience for the future. But if Men either disbelieve or disregard all these things, if they neither care for God's Promises, nor fear his Threatnings; if they trample under foot the Blood of his Son, and grieve his blessed Spirit; if all the Methods of his Mercy and Goodness be lost upon them, there remains no other Remedy, but Justice must have its course. If when they are told so long beforehand, what danger they are in, Men will continue obstinate in their Disobedience, after so many Invitations and Encouragements to Repentance, and after so great Importunity and Forbearance; they can have no reason to complain of the Severity of that Sentence, which they have been so often threatned with, and have as often despised.

Since the Rewards are eternal on the one hand, and the Punishments on the other, the Rewards being proportionable to the Punishments, the Terms are on both sides equal; and since it is in our Power by the Help of the Divine Grace to avoid the Punishments and obtain the Rewards, the Condition is such, as that any wise Man would be thankful for it, and would be glad that such a Prize is put into his hands; so far would he be from complain-

plaining, that the Terrors of Punishments are join'd to the Encouragement of Rewards; that all Motives concur to make him happy, and that God has used all means both inward by his Grace, and outward by his Promises and Threatnings to bring us to Salvation.

I repeat it again, for God himself often repeats it in the Holy Scriptures; *God hath no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked*, but hath used all means to prevent it, he hath provided Heaven for us, and threatned Hell, if we will not be perswaded to go to Heaven. If Men will neglect the Means of their Salvation, and will not repent and turn to him, notwithstanding all his most loving and compassionate Exhortations, and the Death of his own Son for them, if neither Heaven can invite, nor Hell frighten them from their Sins, they must thank themselves only for that Destruction, which they bring upon themselves. The Appeal which God so long ago made to the *House of Israel*, may at the last Day be alledg'd to Sinners. Ye have said, that *the way of the Lord is not equal*. Hear now, O ye Sinners, *Is not my way equal*, have not *your ways been unequal*? And the ways of God shall then appear so equal, and the ways of wicked Men so unreasonable and perverse, that their own Consciences shall bear Witness against them; and He that died to save them will pronounce the Sentence of eternal Damnation upon them.



# C H A P. XV.

## Of the Jewish Law.

**T**Here is nothing which vulgar Minds are more surpris'd and offended at, nor at which Men of Understanding and Experience are less inclin'd to wonder or take Offence, than the several Laws and Customs of divers Nations in the different Ages and Climates of the World; The Habit, the Language, the Letters, and manner of Writing; the Food, the Complexion, the Features of the Body, and Disposition of the Mind are various in different Countries and Ages. And therefore it is no wonder that the Political and Ceremonial Part of the *Jewish* Law, which was given so many Ages ago, and in a Country, which is at this Day very different in its Customs from ours, should be as different from the Customs in use amongst us, as the Age and Climate. For when God doth appoint Laws for Men, he must be supposed to appoint such as are suitable to the Necessities and Occasions of those for whom they are made. And some who have travelled into the Eastern

Eastern Countries, which are not so variable in their Fashions and Way of Living, as the Western Nations are, have found great advantages both from the Nature of the Inhabitants, and of the Climates, and from the Customs and Manners of those Parts of the World, for the explication of divers places of Scripture, which depend upon the knowledge of those Countries.

Now the whole *Jewish* Law may be divided into the *Moral*, the *Political* or *Judicial*, and the *Ceremonial* Law. The Moral Part of *Moses's* Law, which is contain'd in the Ten Commandments, and enjoyns our Duty towards God and towards our Neighbour, is just and holy beyond all Controversy or Exception. And the Political or Judicial Part with the Ceremonial was adapted to the Circumstances and Necessities of those Ages and that Nation. And if the Moral Part be absolutely most Divine and Holy, and the Positive Institutions both Political and Ritual, were the most fit and proper for that Time and Government; that is, if they were the best that could be, for those Ages and that People; then the whole Body of the *Mosaic* Law is without all just Exception. And that this is so, it will be evident, if we observe the Reasons upon which the Positive Laws amongst the *Jews* were instituted.

1. The Judicial Laws, relating to the Administration of Justice in the *Jewish* Government

ment, are so reasonable, that they have been transcrib'd into the Laws of the wisest Hea-then Nations, as hath been particularly shewn by Learned Men. There are but few of the Judicial Laws which have been objected against, and these have been often and effectually vindicated. The Law which seems most harsh and rigorous is that of Retaliation; which yet was the most antient way of Punishment in most Nations, and was not unjust for the Laws to inflict, tho' it was sinful in the Persons injured to require it out of a Desire of Revenge, and with a Delight to gratify themselves in their Enemies Sufferings. For if it be just to punish the taking away of a little Money with Death, how can it be unjust to inflict the same Punishment for the depriving a Man of his Eye? And if it be not unjust to make Death the Punishment of striking out an Eye (and what Nation doth not punish much less Injuries with Death?) How can it be unjust to punish the Offender with the Loss of his own Eye? One of the severest Laws that ever was known amongst a civilised People, was that of the Twelve Tables, which

(\*) *Sunt enim quidam non laudabilia Natura, sed jure concessa: ut in XII. Tabulis Debitoris Corpus inter Creditores dividi licuit; quam legem mos Publicus repudiavit. Quintil. Institut. lib. iii. cap. 6.*

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their own Nature, but yet are allow'd and permitted, as *Quintilian* has observ'd upon particular Reasons: but this Law was laid aside by a general Disuse, and (b) that of Retaliation among the *Jews* was interpreted by them, according to an Antient Tradition, to be meant not of strict Retaliation, but of a Compensation to be made in Money to the Person maimed. (b) Light.  
Hor. Ho-  
braia ad  
Mat. v.

2. Many of those Rites which may seem strange to us, were so far from being esteem'd absurd, that they became common in those Countries, as Circumcision was antiently, and is to this day practis'd in many Parts of the World; (c) the *Egyptians* and many other Nations abstain'd from Swines Flesh, and the *Ethiopians* from most of the Meats which were forbidden the *Jews*; such Abstinencies being necessary for Health in those Countries. Frequent Washings likewise are requisite in hot Countries for Health and Refreshment; Religion prescrib'd only the Time, and Manner, and particular Occasion of it, the Thing it self is Natural. And when we see such a Body of Laws of so great Antiquity, well contriv'd and wisely instituted for the Substance of them; if there be in some of them any thing peculiar and singular; tho' they were but the Laws of a Man, yet common Modesty and Candor might make us conclude, that so wise a Lawgiver must have some good Reason for those particular Laws, which at this

this distance of Time and Place cannot be so obvious to us; but it would be Rashness to suspect that he had no sufficient Reason for those, who appears to have enacted the rest with so great Wisdom. Thus it would be natural for a Man of tolerable Modesty to conclude, even concerning a System of Humane Laws, tho' no probable Account could be given of many of them. But when God is the Lawgiver, this ought to silence all Disputes, that they are his Laws, and therefore must be wise and good for that People, at that Time, and in their Condition and Circumstances. The Will and Authority of God, without any other Reason, is sufficient of it self, in any Case to be alledg'd, and it may be fit in some Cases, that we should have no other Reason to produce.

It is a rash and dangerous thing to conclude, that God did not command this or that, because we do not see why it should be commanded; this is to say, that we will not believe God to be the Author of any thing which we do not like, or would not have to be His. Are we wont to argue thus about Humane Laws? Would it be any Excuse for a disobedient Subject to say, that in his Opinion, such Laws were not fit to be made, and that therefore he would not believe his Prince had made such Laws; when he had all due notice and full evidence, that he had appointed them, but was resolved to reject the whole  
Body

Body of Laws upon the account of some which he did not fancy, which yet were obsolete and out of Date? Do we not allow that Reasons of State and of Government may require many things to be done, and many Laws to be made, which it doth not belong to private Men to be curious about, and which the greatest Part of the Subjects are not able to comprehend? And are not God's Thoughts infinitely above the Thoughts of the wisest Men, and infinitely farther out of our Reach, than the Counsels of the most Prudent and Politick Prince can be above the Understanding of his meanest and most ignorant Subjects? How shall we dare then to reject any Divine Revelation, because it is not agreeable in every particular to our Thoughts and Notions of things? But I shall enquire however into the Reasons and Grounds, which appear to us at this distance of Time for the Ceremonial Laws, and I doubt not but these will be sufficient to justify them to all impartial Men.

1. The Ceremonial Laws were given the *Jews* to prevent them from falling into Idolatry: For they were design'd to distinguish the *Jews* in many things from the Neighbouring Nations, and to hinder them from following their Idolatrous Customs. And the Customs of the (\*) People of *Israel*, and of the Nations round about them, and the several sorts of Idolatry practis'd amongst the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites* must needs render the

(d) Summa vero rei hæc est: quæ admodum in præcedentibus tibi dixi, dogmata & ritus Zabiorum hodie nobis esse incognitos; ita quoque latent nos Historiæ & annales temporum illorum. Quod si autem illa, omniæque particularia, quæ in illis temporibus acciderunt, nobis essent cognita, multarum quoque in lege divinâ rerum particularium rationes scire possemus. Maimon. More Nevoch. Part 3. c. 34.

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particular occasions and grounds of those Laws, which were made to restrain them from Idolatry, difficult to be understood by all who are unacquainted with the Rites and Idolatrous Worship of those Nations. But of those Laws it is enough for ordinary Readers to know, that they had respect to the Idolatries then practised amongst the bordering Nations, and this the Scripture often tells us. *Lev.* xviii. 3. xx. 23, 24, 25. *Deut.* xii. 30, 31. xiv.

(\*) *Orig.* I, 2. xviii. 9. (\*) *Origen* has observed, that *contra Cels.* those Beasts were by the Law of *Moses* declared to be unclean, by which the *Egyptians* and other Heathen Nations were wont to make their Divinations, and that most besides were allow'd of as clean. And other Particulars have been made out by Learned Men from the best Remains of Antiquity.

And as the *Jews* were taught to look upon the Idolatrous Nations as polluted, and had Laws given them purposely to hinder them from too dangerous a freedom and familiarity with Idolaters; so these Laws might be easily practised when they lived within themselves, separated from other People, but are now become unpracticable since they are dispersed amongst all Nations, and the Laws which were adapted to the State and Circumstances of the *Jewish* Nation and Government, must be out of Date, since the Dissolution of their Government and the Dispersion of the whole People into other Countries. These  
Laws

Laws may well seem strange now to us, when they pretend to practise them, but this ought to be attributed not to the Laws themselves, but to their Adherence to them when the Obligation to observe them is so long since expired, and when the People of the *Jews* are in a condition in which many of their Laws cannot, and others were never designed to be observed. Some (\*) of their *Rabbins* have held that things forbidden by the Law might be eaten by them out of the Land of *Judea*; and the Reason why *Daniel* refused to Eat of the *King's Meat* and Drink of his *Wine*, was, because it was the Custom of (†) Antient Times, and particularly in those Countries, to consecrate all which they did either Eat or Drink to their Gods, by putting part of it on the Altar, or casting it into the Fire; so that to Eat of such Meats or to Drink of such Wine had been to partake of things offered to Idols. And in the *Babylonish* Captivity they were not under so great Difficulties in the Observation of the Laws concerning Clean and Unclean Meats; as they have lain under since their total and final Dispersion, for the Favour which God gave them with the Heathens amongst whom they lived, and the Multitudes which were carried away and lived together, afforded them the conveniency of following their own Rites and Customs in eating such Meats only as were not forbidden or defiled: And then they were restrained from Idolatry by these Abstinences

(x) *Grot.*  
*ad Mat. x.*  
15.

(e) *Grot.*  
*ad Dan. i.*  
8. *Casaub.*  
*ad Aibem.*  
*lib. 1. c.*  
11.

cies, and they became the more remarkable in the Eyes of the Heathens, and their wonderful Zeal for their Religion even in the smallest matters was apt to make those among whom they were Captives, the more earnest to enquire into the greater and more substantial and excellent Things of their Law. And these were Reasons which were worth their submitting to great Inconveniencies, by adhering to their legal Observances in other Countries. But now these and all other Reasons are ceased, and the Case is altered, since they are a despised People, dispersed in small Parties over the face of the whole Earth; and therefore the Abstinencies of the *Jews* are apt to be look'd upon as absurd by those with whom they converse, that will not be at the pains to consider the Grounds upon which they were at first instituted, and that they are no longer Practicable, nor designed to be practised, by their Original Institution.

2. Circumcision, Purifications, Abstinencies, Sacrifices, and other Rites enjoined by the Law of *Moses*, were not required for their own sake, or for any real Vertue and Efficacy supposed to be in the things themselves, to recommend Men to God's Favour, but were Instituted to signify the inward Purity and Integrity of the Heart, and by outward observances and sensible Things, to lead a Carnal and sensual People to the Knowledge and Practice of things Spiritual. The Children of  
*Israel*

*Israel* are sometimes said to be *Sanctified*, that is, to be separated and set apart for God's Honour and Service by these Rites and Ceremonies, both because they were hereby distinguished from other Nations, and because this Ritual Worship was appointed as a Means to lead them to internal Sanctity and Holiness of Mind, and to procure in them an Awe and Reverence of that Majesty, by whose Commandment it was to be observed.

Circumcision was appointed as a Federal Rite, and as a Token and Pledge of the Covenant between God and *Abraham*, and his seed after him, of which the *Messias* was to be born. And as it was a Sacrament of the Covenant between God and the People of *Israel*, so it had Respect to the Nations whom they were to root out; these Nations were notorious for the Sins of the Flesh, *Lev. xviii. 24.* and there is a peculiar significancy in the Rite of Circumcision of the Restraint and Excision of Carnal Lusts. It was declared by *Moses* himself to signify the Circumcision of the Heart, *Lev. xxvi. 41. Deutr. x. 16. xxx. 6.* and likewise by the Prophets *Jer. iv. 4. vi. 10. Ezek. xlv. 7.* They expound Circumcision in a Mystical and Spiritual Sense; and according to this notion of Circumcision *St. Paul* maintains that the true Circumcision is among the Christians, whereof the Jewish Circumcision of the Flesh was but a Figure, *Rom. ii. 28. Phil. iii. 3.*

## The Reasonableness and Certainty

The Pardon of Sin upon Repentance is expressed in Scripture by cleansing and purifying, *Psal. xix. 12. li. 2. Isai. i. 16. Jer. iv. 14. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.* by which is denoted to us that outward cleansing of the Flesh design'd to put Men in mind of the inward Purification and Cleansing from Sin and from Unrighteousness, because this defiles the Soul, and makes it loathsome in God's Sight, *2 Cor. vii. 1. Jam. iv. 8.*

Abstinency from things in a Legal Account, *Common and Unclean* was appointed to restrain Men by Symbolical Instructions from Sin, which pollutes the Mind, and the Moral (\*) signification of such Prohibitions is implied in the Proverb alleged by *St. Peter* concerning Dogs and Swine, which are two of the Animals prohibited the *Jews*, *2 Pet. ii. 22.*

(e) Quid ergo est? In Animalibus mores depinguntur homani, & Actus & Voluntates. — in Animalibus per legem quasi quoddam humanæ vitæ speculum constitutum est. Novatian. de lib. Judaic. c. 3.

Sacrifices and Offerings were to represent to them, that they depended upon God for all they had, and therefore they were to offer something of every kind in Acknowledgment, that they had received all which they enjoyed from him. They were likewise designed to signify to them that their Sins deserved Death, even *Everlasting Burnings*. The daily Sacrifices were to be Remembrances to them of that Acceptable and Living Sacrifice, which they

they were to offer to God, *a broken and a contrite Heart*, and an Innocent and Blameless Life, *Pf. iv. 4, 5. Cxli. 2.* And the Scriptures frequently testify how little Pleasure God took in the Sacrifices of Beasts, and in Burnt-Offerings, Incense, and Oblations, and how small Regard he had to them: He never required these things for themselves and upon their own Account, or because there is any thing acceptable to him in them, *Psal. xl. 6, 4. l. 8, li. 17.* To do Justice and love Mercy is more acceptable to God than all Sacrifices, *Prov. xxi. 3. Jer. vii. 22, 23.* This is so evident throughout the whole Old Testament, that the Scribes and Pharisees in the most superstitious and corrupt Age of the *Jewish Church*, could not but confess that the Love of God and of our Neighbour, is of more Account in God's sight than all the Sacrifices and Oblations in the World, *Mark xii. 37.* The Ceremonial Part of the Law was always to give place to the Moral: thus Acts of Charity were to be done, tho' it happened that they were performed by the violation of the *Jewish Sabbath*, and the Prophets were, upon necessary Causes, held exempted from the Legal Observances. *For I desired Mercy and not Sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than Burnt-Offerings. Hos. vi. 6.*

3. All the *Jewish Worship* appointed by the Mosaical Law was Typical of Christ and his Gospel. By a *Type* we are to understand the



Likeness and Resemblance which one thing has to another, as that of the Impression to the Seal, or of the Shadow to the Substance, or of the Picture to the Man whom it represents. Thus the Death of Christ was typified or resembled, or represented and prefigured by the Death of the Beasts which were Sacrificed; they were signs appointed to keep up the Remembrance that Christ was to be Sacrificed, and were very apt and proper to put Men in Mind of it. It was acknowledged by the *Jews*, and received from the Beginning as a certain Rule for the Interpretation of Scripture that there was a Typical as well as a Literal Sense of it, relating to the *Messias* and his Kingdom. Circumcision was to signify to them that Christ was to be born of the Seed of *Abraham*, to whom Circumcision was first enjoined upon the Promise made to him of *Isaac*, from whom Christ was to descend: And the Blood shed in Circumcision was Typical of that Blood which Christ was to shed for us.

The most probable Account of the Original of Sacrifices is, that they were at first of Divine Institution, and were appointed soon after the Fall of Man as Types of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, who was promised to be sent to die for the Expiation of Sin. For tho' there be a natural Reason why we should not Offer unto the Lord our God of that which doth Cost us nothing, but should Honour

*Honour the Lord with our Substance.* 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. Prov. iii. 9. and should present some part of the best of what we have, in Devotion and Gratitude to him, from whom we have received the Whole: Yet no sufficient Reason can be given why Beasts should be Slain in Sacrifice, before they were used, as far as it appears, for Food by Men, or how it should be imagined that God would accept of the Blood of any Creature, or be pleased with the taking from it that Life which he had given it, or why a peculiar Efficacy towards the Expiation of Sin was supposed to be in the Blood, unless it had been upon the Account of the Blood of Christ which was Typically prefigured by the Blood of Beasts. By Faith whereof *Abel* offered his Sacrifice and was accepted, *Heb. xi. 4.* The Paschal Lamb was a plain Type of Christ, for which Reason Christ is styled, *the Lamb of God and our Passover which is Sacrificed for us, Jo. i. 29. 1 Cor. v. 7.* And for the same Reason the Feast of the Passover was appointed to the *Israelites* just before their Escape out of *Egypt* to be a Type to them of that Deliverance which Christ was to accomplish, of which their Deliverance out of *Egypt* was but a Figure. *Aaron* was a Type of Christ, and all the Sacrifices he offered were Types of Christ's Sacrifice upon the Cross: They were appointed to take away the Legal Uncleaness, to restore Men to a State of Legal Purity,

urity, which was Typical of Moral and Spiritual Purity, and to put the Legal Worshipers into such a Condition as the Law required to qualify them for the *Legal Service and Worship*; and herein they were Figures of that one Sacrifice, which was to be offered up once for all in Attonement for the Sins of all Mankind, *Hebr. ix. 14.* whereby Men might be rendred Capable of paying God an acceptable Service *in Spirit and in Truth.*

Legal Purifications were Typical of that Purification which is by the Blood of Christ, *Tit. ii. 14. 1 John i. 9.* And the smoak of the Incense ascending signified how the Prayers of the Saints come up before God, *Rev. v. 8. viii. 3, 4.* The State and Dispensation of the Gospel is exprest by the Prophet *Malachi* under the Figure of *Incense* and a *Pure Offering*, *Malach. i. 11.*

The whole Epistle to the *Hebrews* is written upon this subject, to shew that all the Legal Rites and Ceremonial Worship, were but Shadows, and Types, and Figures of Christ, and of that Redemption, Righteousness, and Sanctification, which was to be wrought by him, and that therefore they were to cease when in him they had received their Accomplishment. Their Incense and Purifications, their Sacrifices, their Temple, and the Priests themselves were all but so many Types of Christ and his Kingdom under the Gospel. Christ had been promised to our first Parents  
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immediately after their Fall, and this Promise had been renewed to *Abraham*, with an Assurance that he should descend from *Isaac*, and Circumcision was instituted as a perpetual mark in the Flesh of that Covenant; and all Sacrifices from the beginning of their Institution were as so many Types and Memorials of the Sacrifice of Christ, which was promised before any Sacrifice had been offered: And more especially that of the Passover at the deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt* was a lively Representation of our Redemption by the Death of Christ. They had ever this Notion of their legal Worship: *Abraham* to whom Circumcision was appointed, saw the day of Christ; he fore-saw his Descent from himself, which was thereby prefigured and was glad, *Joh. viii. 56.* And *Moses* by whom the Ceremonial Service was ordained, had so clear a Prospect of the *Messias* and his Kingdom that he esteemed the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of *Egypt*, *Hebr. xi. 26.* Those places of Scripture which the Apostles apply to Christ out of the Old Testament, were at that time by the *Jews* themselves, to whom they Cite them, understood of the *Messias*; they always supposed that whatever was great and Excellent among them, was but a faint and imperfect Resemblance of that Glory and Excellency which was to be in its full Perfection and Accomplishment under the *Messias*.

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4. During this Ceremonial Dispensation, there was a sufficient Revelation of the internal and spiritual Part of Religion: In the Books of *Moses*, the Love of God with all the Heart, and the Love of their Neighbour as of Themselves, is expressly commanded the Children of *Israel*. *Lev. xix. 18. Dent. vi. 5.* The High Priest's Office was to bless the People. *Numb. vi. 23.* and the Office of the Priests and Levites, besides the Ceremonial Service, was to stand every Morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at Even. *1 Chron. xxiii. 30. 2 Chron. xxxi. 2.* and (\*) no Sacrifice was ever offered without Prayers. The immortality of the Soul is implied in that Expression, which is often used in the Books of *Moses*, that Men when they died were gathered to their People: which must be understood of their Souls; their Bodies being buried at different places and in divers Countries, not where their Ancestors had been buried. And tho' this and such like Phrases may sometimes signify no more, than their leaving the World, as others had done before them (as most Words and Expressions are often used improperly) and may in some places be applied to ill Men; yet there could never have been any Reason or Foundation for such a Phrase, but from a Supposition of the Soul's Immortality. *Balaam* wish'd to die the Death of the Righteous, and that his last End might be like that of the Righteous. *Numb. xxiii. 10.*

For

(x) *Vid.*  
*Outr. de*  
*Sacrific.*  
*lib. 1. c.*  
*15. §. 9.*

For what Reason, but that he might not be miserable, but happy after Death?

A future State was always believ'd by the *Jews*, as revealed to them in the Old Testament, and whatever Texts there may be, which seem to imply the contrary, they are either spoken only by way of Objection, as in the Book of *Ecclesiastes*, or else they have no Relation to the State after this Life, either to affirm or deny it; but are to be understood to proceed from that Desire, which pious Men had to honour and glorify God in their several Generations, by restoring his Worship, where it had been neglected, or in propagating his Religion, where it had not been yet known. Thus that good King *Hezekiah*, says to God in his Thanksgiving; *The Grave cannot praise thee, Death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the Pit, cannot hope for thy Truth. The Living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: The Father to the Children shall make known thy Truth.* Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19. This is spoken with the same Zeal and Spirit, by which he was acted in his Reformation. And when *David* said, *In Death there is no Remembrance of thee, in the Grave, who shall give thee Thanks?* Psal. vi. 5. He cannot be supposed to have any Doubtfulness concerning a future State; for in other *Psalms*, he plainly asserts it. *Psal. xvi. 11. xvii. 15.* But his Meaning is explain'd *Psal. xxx. 9.* where he says, *What profit is there in my Blood,*  
when



*when I go down into the Pit? Shall the Dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy Truth?* In our other Translation it is, *Shall the Dust give Thanks to thee?* To give Thanks then to God, is in grateful Acknowledgment for his Mercies; to praise and magnify his Name, and manifest his Truth among Men, which is not to be done in the Grave. God's Dispensations to the People of *Israel*, being with this Design: Pious Men desir'd that their Lives might be prolong'd for this purpose, that they might declare his Truth, and Vindicate and promote his Honour in this World, before they were call'd to the next, where there can be no Opportunity for this Service to God and Benefit to Mankind.

*Enoch* was taken up alive into Heaven, to be an Example of that Happiness which God has prepar'd for those who *walk with him*, and pleaseth him. *Gen. v. 24.* And our Saviour *Mark xii. 26.* proves the Resurrection of the Dead from *Exod. iii. 6.* Those for whom God has that peculiar Favour, as to stile Himself *their God*, and to declare this to be *His Name* or Title *for ever*, and this to be *His Memorial unto all Generations*, *Verf. 15.* we may be assured are not so dead, as utterly to have perish'd: and if their Souls have surviv'd their Bodies, their Bodies likewise must be raised again; forasmuch as the Soul of *Abraham* without his Body is not *Abraham*, but only one part of him: and his Soul could not  
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be stil'd *Abraham*, but with respect not only to its past, but to its future Union with his Body: For tho' a part be often put for the whole, yet it always supposes either the present or future Existence of the Whole; but is never put for the whole, when it remains alone, and the rest is utterly and finally extinct. *Abraham* consists of Soul and Body, and therefore God being the God of *Abraham*, is God both of the Soul and Body of *Abraham*; which is an Argument that the Soul of *Abraham* now lives, and that his Body shall live again; for *All live to God*. And he would not have given himself a solemn Title and Denomination from a Man who had no longer any Being; nor from that Part of him, which had utterly perish'd. *I am the God of thy Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. *Abraham* had his Name in Token that he should be a *Father of many Nations*. Gen. xvii. 5. and *Isaac* and *Jacob* were Heirs of the same Promise; and therefore the God of *Abraham* is the God of that Father of Nations, and has a particular Regard to the Bodies (from which those Nations were descended) as well as to the Souls of *Abraham* and his Posterity. *I am the God of Abraham*, not *I was*, but *I am*, which supposes *Abraham* yet to be. *I am the same God* still to him, that *I was* during his Life upon earth; he is still the Object of the Divine Care and Goodness, and therefore shall be rewarded

warded both in Body and Soul. *God is not ashamed to be call'd their God: for he hath prepared for them a City.* Heb. xi. 16. that is, an Habitation in Heaven.

The Children of *Israel* before the giving of the Law were instructed in the Rewards and Punishments of the Life to come; and Temporal Rewards and Punishments were appointed by *Moses*, as Pledges and Types to represent and prefigure to them those of a Future State. For that *Abraham* and the Patriarchs before him, had a true and full Notion of a Life after this, we are certain from *Heb. xi. 10, 13.* And we have as great Certainty, that *Abraham* did instruct his Children and his Household after him. *Gen. xviii. 19.* and *Moses* wrote of Christ. *Jo. v. 46. Gen. iii. 15. xii. 3. xlix. 10. Deut. xviii. 15, 18.*

These things were delivered in the Books of *Moses*, and well understood by the Generality of the *Jews* in all Ages, the *Sadducees* were singular in denying the Resurrection of the Dead, and some other Doctrines, in which all the rest were agreed. But if there were any Obscurity or Difficulty in the Books of *Moses*, they had besides the Priests a constant Succession of Prophets for many Ages to Interpret them, and to maintain and inculcate those Fundamental Doctrines of Religion. The Rewards of Heaven are declared, *Psal. xvi. 11. xvii. 15. Prov. xv. 24. Eccles. xii. 14. Dan. xii. 2, 3.* The Torments of Hell are asserted;

serted, *Psal.* xvi. 10. *Eccles.* xi. 9. xii. 14. *Isai.* xxxiii. 14. *Dan.* xii. 2. The Resurrection of the Dead, *Psal.* xvii. 15. *Isai.* xxvi. 19. *Ezek.* xxxvii. 1. *Dan.* xii. 2. *Hos.* xiii. 14. And in the Book of *Job*, which is of the greatest Antiquity, *Job* xiv. 12. xix. 26. 27. In that Expression that *David* and others *Slept with their Fathers*, is implied not only the Immortality of the Soul, but the Resurrection of the Body. For it implies that there was not a total end of them, but as they Slept so must they awake and rise again, *Psal.* xvii. 15. And this Expression is taken from the Old Testament, and applied to the same Sense in the New. Our Saviour speaking of Regeneration, says to *Nicodemus*, *art thou a Master in Israel and knowest not these things?* *Job.* iii. 10. and he bids the *Jews* search the *Scriptures* of the Old Testament; for in them says he, *ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me,* *Job* v. 39. it was in them fore-told that a much clearer Revelation was to be made by the Gospel *Jer.* xxxi. 31. When our Saviour by his Resurrection gave a fuller Manifestation of a future Immortal State than could be given by any other Means, and brought *Life and Immortality to Light thro the Gospel*, *2 Tim.* i. 10. Yet this it self was Typified in the Old Testament, by raising Dead Men to Life again; and the Translation of *Enoch* and *Elijah* into Heaven was for a Testimony and Assurance

surance of a Future State both of Body and Soul.

The Doctrin deliverd by *Moses* and the Prophets was as effectual a Caution and warning to Men, to keep them from *the place of Torments* as a Message from the Dead could have been, *Luke xvi. 31.* The Old Testament therefore is not deficient in any necessary Point of Salvation, but the Ceremonial Law was enjoyned, as a suitable Help and Expedient for the retaining those Truths which had been revealed before. Which was so well known,

(x) *Origen.*  
*CONTRA.*  
*Cels. lib. 2.*

(\*) that *Celsus* puts this as an Objection into the Mouth of the *Jews*, whom he brings in Arguing against the Christian Religion, that it taught them nothing but what they knew before, concerning the Resurrection of the Dead, and a future Judgment and a State of Rewards and Punishments in another World. And it cannot be denied that the *Apocryphal* as well as the *Canonical* Books teach these things.

The Honour and Authority of our Religion amongst Men depends very much upon a right Knowledge and a due consideration of this Subject. And those who profess never so great Veneration for the New Testament, but have little esteem for any part of the Old, understand neither the one nor the other as they ought. They refer all along to each other, and must stand or fall together, for the one is but a Draught as it were, or Model of

of the other; all things being though obscurely, yet sufficiently taught in the Old Testament, which are fully and lively express'd in the New.

The Sum of all is this. The Faith in the *Messias* to come, and the Principles of Religion and Morality had been delivered down from the Beginning by *Adam* and *Noah* to their Posterity: And when *Moses* by God's Direction and Appointment gave Laws to the Children of *Israel*; the End and Design of these Laws was the preservation of this Faith and Practice amongst them. And this was effected by visible Objects and sensible Remembrances; the *Jewish* Dispensation was ordain'd in condescension to the Circumstances and Capacities of those Ages and that Nation, in such a manner as was most suitable to their Condition, and most Worthy of God; the rest of the World had wholly given up and abandoned themselves to Carnal Ordinances and Superstitions; and God, who produceth Good out of Evil, made use of this Fondness and Dotage of Mankind to the Preseryation and Advancement of Truth and Holiness amongst Men. The Ceremonial Worship was no farther acceptable to God, and no otherwise design'd by Him, than to keep his People from running into Idolatry, to which they had so great a Proneness, to put them in mind of their own Sinfulness and Unworthiness, to preserve a Sense of Moral Duties, and of an



inward and spiritual Service; and to retain a Remembrance and Expectation of that *Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction*, which had been foretold, and was *in the Fulness of time* to be offered upon the Cross for the Sins of the World.

Thanks be to God, that we are instructed to worship him *in Spirit and in Truth*, without so many burthenfome Ceremonies; but in those Ages of the World, nothing would have seem'd more strange and absurd than a Religion without some Pomp and Solemnity of Ceremonies: And God appointed for his People those which were innocent, to restrain them from all that were wicked and hurtful; He appointed the Sacrifices of Beasts to be Types of Christ's Sacrifice, and to withhold them from Humane Sacrifices, which were practis'd in other Nations, and enjoin'd by other Religions; he commanded them to abstain from certain Meats, that they might not eat of Things offer'd to Idols, and these innocent Ceremonies he made useful and serviceable to the Great Ends of Faith and Righteousness. Nothing impracticable can be supposed to be prescrib'd by God to any People; nothing which is above their Abilities and present Attainments; and therefore would be of no use and benefit to them. But rather the Divine Goodness would condescend to their Infirmities, and comply with them in giving them such Laws, as may be agree

agreeable and convenient for them in their present State, and may fit them for an higher and more excellent Dispensation. Whatsoever we may think of it now, nothing at the time, when the Law was given, would have look'd like Religion, that had been without abundance of Rites and Ceremonies. And herein the Wisdom of God appears, that to such a People and in such an Age, he gave a Law so admirably proper, and well contriv'd to preserve the Life and Substance of Religion under the Veil of Ceremonies, and to prepare them for the coming of his Son, when it was to be of no longer continuance. *The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.* Joh. i. 17. that is, the Grace of the Gospel, and the Truth and Reality or Substance of those Things, which were prefigur'd by the Law.

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## CHAP. XVI.

### *Of the Cessation of the Jewish Law.*

OUR SAVIOUR was the GREAT PROPHET, who was to come, as *Moses* had foretold, and who was expected at the time of *His* coming; and it was likewise  
X 3 expected,

expected, that that Prophet should work Miracles, as *Moses* had done, whom he was to be like, and he was to be a Lawgiver as *Moses* had been. The *Jews* had a general Expectation that the *Messiah* would manifest Himself by Miracles. *Joh. vii. 31.* Miracles had not been for a long time wrought in the *Jewish* Church, but it was receiv'd as a known and undoubted Truth, that they were to be reviv'd by Him. The (x) *Rabbins* still teach that the Gift of Prophecy is to return at the coming of the *Messiah*, according to God's exprefs Promise: And the *Samaritans* themselves had this Notion of the *Messiah*, that he was to give full Instructions in all things relating to the Worship of God. *Joh. iv. 25.* And the Prophecies concerning the Birth, and Life and Death of Christ, in all things necessary to prove him the true *Messiah*, were literally fulfilled in our Saviour, and those things which concern the Nature of His Kingdom, have been explain'd by Him and his Apostles. So that it being fully prov'd, that Jesus is the Christ by the Accomplishment in Him of the Antient Prophecies concerning the *Messiah*, we ought to rest satisfied in his Authority, both for the Cessation of the Law of *Moses*, and for any Explication which He and his Apostles have given us of it. But this is not all, we are able to prove against the *Jews* from the Books of the Old Testament, that their Laws was to cease, when the *Messiah* was come.

The

(x) Mai.  
mn. More  
Neuoch.  
Part 2. r.  
36.

The Gospel is so far from containing any thing contrary to the Law, that it is the Fulfilling and Accomplishment of it. The Moral Precepts are improv'd and advanced, and the Ceremonial and Ritual Part was not properly abrogated and abolish'd, but it continued for as long time as it was design'd to do, and then expir'd of it self; it serv'd these Ends for which it was instituted, and afterwards must of consequence cease. The Ceremonial Worship therefore was permitted to the *Jews*, who became Converts to the Christian Faith, till the Destruction of their City and Temple, and then it was no longer practicable, but must of necessity cease; and the Cessation of the Law of *Moses*, when once it had its Period and Accomplishment, was as much the Will of the Legillator, at its first Institution, as its former Obligation could be.

The *Jewish* Law being Figurative and Typical, it follows, that it was to cease of course, when the Things prefigur'd and typified by it, should be brought to pass, that is, when the *Messiah* should come. For then the Types and Figures being fulfilled, could be of no longer use, nor the Law which enjoyn'd them, of any longer continuance, when once this Principal Reason of it ceased, and all other ends design'd by it, might be better attain'd without it, by the Worship of God in Spirit and in Truth. And this Law was so contriv'd, as not only to expire upon the fulfilling of it

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by the *Messiah*, but to become impracticable and impossible to be observ'd afterwards. I shall therefore prove the Cessation of the *Jewish* Law. I. Because the *Messiah* is come, in whom it was fulfilled. II. Because it was foretold by the Prophets, that the Law should cease upon the coming of the *Messiah*. III. Because after the coming of the *Messiah*, it was to become impracticable and impossible to be observ'd.

(a) *Man-  
ster. de  
Messia.*

I. The *Messiah* is come, in whom the Law is fulfilled. As the coming of the *Messiah* was prefigur'd in the various Types and Ceremonies of the Law, which were therefore to receive their Accomplishment in him, so it is manifest that our Saviour is the *Messiah*, since the Prophecies concerning the *Messiah* have been all fulfill'd in Him. This has been already prov'd at large; and the Prophecies of *Zethariah* and *Malachy*, are so very plainly and undeniably fulfilled, that (\*) some of the *Jews*, to evade them, have been forced to say, that the *Messiah* was born before the Destruction of the second Temple, tho' he doth not yet appear, but that he was seen at *Rome*, and has ever since lain conceal'd, as *Moses* did in the House of *Pharaoh*; and that the time will come, when he shall require the Dismissal of the *Jews* from the *Pope*, as *Moses* demanded of *Pharaoh* the Dismissal of the Children of *Israel*. But they say, that he defers the Manifestation of himself by reason of their Sins; and

and upon this account have made many solemn Humiliations to implore his Help and hasten his coming; particularly *A. D. MDII.* they appointed a Publick Humiliation for Young and Old, Men, Women, and Children in all Parts of the World, for nigh a whole Year together. (b) *Trypho* did not deny that Christ was born, and might be somewhere unknown, but said, that he could not know himself to be Christ, nor work Miracles, till *Elias* had anointed him, and manifested him to the World. (x) Others have said, that there is to be a Third Temple, and during the time of the last, the Messiah will come, only because *Abraham* call'd the Place where the Temple stood, a Mountain, *Isaac* a Field, and *Jacob* an House. Some are of Opinion, that their Sins hinder his coming; some again think, that they are neither sinful enough, nor righteous enough: For, say they, he must come in a Generation altogether sinful, or altogether righteous.

(b) *Just. Martyr. Dialog.*

(x) *Max. Her. lb.*

The Prophecy of *Daniel's Weeks* is so punctually in all its Circumstances fulfilled, that not only (f) *Josephus* and the modern *Jews* apply it to the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*, but (i) some of the *Jews* when they could not deny the Computation to be true, and to agree exactly with the time of our Saviour's Birth, have even dared to say that *Daniel* himself was mistaken in the Account, others have confess'd that all the Terms of Time assigned

(f) *Joseph. Antiqu. Jud. lib. x. c. 12.*

*Secundum Scriptum Judaei apud Limborch.*

(i) *Lud. Viv. de ver. Fid. lib. 2.*



assigned for the coming of the *Messiah* are past, and that now their only hopes of deliverance and redemption are to be placed in their Repentance; and others lay a Curse upon such as presume to fix any particular Time

(g) *Grot. de Veris. lib. v. S. 14. & inter Sarrau. Epist.*

for the coming of the *Messiah*. But (g) *Rabbi Nehumias* who lived fifty years before Christ, declared that the coming of the *Messiah* according to *Daniels* Prophecy could not be deferred beyond the space of fifty years longer, as *Grotius* has observed from the *Talmud*.

(c) *Bishop Pearson on the Creed art. iv.*

Divers (c) of the *Jews* place the Passion of Christ sixty nine years before our common Account of the Year in which he truly suffered, others pretend another different Account without the least Reason for either pretence, but this shews how desperate a Cause they are engaged in, which forceth them upon such Artifices; for we have the express Testimony of *Tacitus*, that he suffered under *Pontius Pilate*. They Interpret *Isai. vii. 14.* where it is Prophefied that the *Messiah* was to be Born of a Virgin, contrary to the Sense of their Fore-Fathers, and therefore reject the Antient Translation of that Verse by

(d) *Just. Mart. Dialog.*

the *Septuagins*, as (d) *Justin Martyr* urged against the *Jews* of his time. In *Origen's* time they expounded *Isai. liii.* of the Nation of the *Jews*, not of any particular Person, though

(e) *Origen. contr. Cels. lib. 1.*

as (e) *Origen* Argued in a Disputation with them, the Tenor of the whole Chapter is a plain confutation of this way of expounding it,

it, and especially these words of the 8th Verse, *for the Transgression of my People was he stricken.* By the Person stricken cannot be understood the People, for whose Transgression he is said to have been stricken. <sup>(h)</sup> But they <sup>(h) Grot. ib. lib. v. s. 19. Bl. son ib.</sup> have found out another Evasion by pretending that there are to be two *Messiahs*, one the Son of *Joseph*, who is to be a suffering *Messiah*, and the other the Son of *David*, who is to enjoy all manner of Temporal Prosperity and Power.

So plain is it, that the Prophecies which the *Jews* themselves of old understood of Christ are fulfilled in our Saviour, and so unavoidably do they contradict all their own Antient Interpretations of Scripture, when they will not allow them to be fulfilled in him, For that they are fulfilled it is evident, and they can assign no other Person in whom they have been fulfilled.

II. It was fore-told by the Prophets, that the Law should cease upon the coming of the *Messiah*. It is evident from the Prophets that in some years after Christ, *Jerusalem* was to be no longer the seat of the *Jewish* Power and Government, nor the place of Worship. And their Prophecies suppose the Cessation of the *Jewish* Law upon a Two-fold Account, 1. From the Destruction of the Temple. 2. From the Dispersion of the People of the *Jews* and the Destruction of their City.

1. From the Destruction of the Temple.  
The

The Prophet *Daniel* fore-told that after the *Messiah* was cut off the *Sanctuary* should be destroyed, and the *Sacrifice* and the *Oblation* should Cease, and that there should be Desolation even until the *Consummation*, *Dan. ix. 26, 27.* Since the *Sanctuary* is laid waste and desolate, and by this Prophecy is never to be Rebuilt, the *Temple* being the Place of all their Worship and Solemnities, that failing their whole Worship must fail with it. And whenever the *Jews* have attempted to Rebuild their *Temple*, they have been hindred from doing it, and particularly (as I have several times already observed) in the time of *Julian* the Apostate, by Miraculous and dreadful Judgments, related by *Ammianus Marcellinus* an Heathen Historian, who lived at that time, and by a (\*) *Jewish* Writer. And when they have been permitted to Build them *Synagogues* and Places of Worship in all other Parts of the World, that Place alone has been denied them in which by their Law they were indispensably bound to Worship. All the Males were obliged to resort to *Jerusalem* to Worship thrice every year, and the Place of their Worship was more strictly enjoyned than the time. For if any Man were upon a Journey, or Unclean, a second *Passover* was appointed for him, but it could be observed at no other Place but *Jerusalem*, upon any occasion whatsoever, *Num. ix. 10. Deutr. xvi. 5.* And therefore during the Captivity at *Babylon*, they did not  
Cele-

(x) *Wagen-  
seil. Annot.  
ad excerpta  
Gemara.  
cap. i. p.  
336.*

Celebrate these Feasts of the Passover of *Pentecost*, and of *Tabernacles*; how could they Sing the Lord's Song in a strange Land? *Psal. Cxxxvii. 4.* And the Destruction of the City and Temple by the *Romans* at the time of the Passover, was a sign that they were no longer God's Peculiar People, nor under the Protection of those Promises, which by the Law were made to them, and had ever been fulfilled till the time of the Promise was expired. St. (1) *Chrysostom* blames the *Jews* of his time for observing the Law in the Countries whither they were dispersed, which he proves to be contrary to God's Commandment, and to the Practice of their Ancestors: And the Modern *Jews* confess that their Worship is impracticable in their present Condition, they acknowledge that they ought to offer Sacrifice no where else but at the Temple of *Jerusalem*; the Observation of the Passover among them now is without Sacrificing the Paschal Lamb, and they observe the day of Atonement without the Sacrifice of Expiation.

(1) *Chrys.*  
*adv. Jude-*  
*os lib. 1.*  
*Tom. 6.*  
*Sav. Edit.*

2. The Destruction of the City of *Jerusalem*, and the final Dispersion of the People of the whole Nation of the *Jews* proves, that their Law is at an end. *Jacob* plainly foretold both the coming of the *Messiah*, and the end of the Power and Authority of the Nation of the *Jews* upon His coming. *The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law giver from between His feet until Shiloh come, and unto Him*

Him shall the gathering of the People be. Gen. xlix. 10. This Prophecy was by the antient Jews always understood of the *Messiah*, as is evident by the *Targums*; and it appears to be fulfill'd in our Saviour, both because the *Jewish* Government in His time was drawing towards its final Period, and because the People of all Nations have been gathered to Him, and have been made Profelytes to his Religion. The *Sceptre* and the *Law-giver*, that is, the Power of their Arms, and the Authority of their Laws was not so to depart, as to become extinct, till the *Messiah* came, which implies that soon after his coming, they were both to cease, as we see they have long since actually done. The Accomplishment of *Jacob's* Prophecy was gradual; *Herod* was of another Nation, but a Profelyte, and upon that account he might be stil'd a *Jew*; as (\*) *Is. Casaubon* has prov'd against *Baronius*: And when he was made King of the *Jews*, this was as a Warning to awaken them to expect the full Accomplishment of this Prophecy, which was brought to pass in the final Destruction of their Government. The *Jewish* Government all along under all Changes was still denominated from *Judah*, tho' that Tribe was not always in Chief Power; and even under *Herod*, who was an *Idumean*, it had its Title from *Judah*; as the Roman Empire retain'd its old Denomination, when divers of the Emperours were not *Romans* by Birth.

But

(x) Exerc.  
stat. 1.  
Num. 5.

But when the *Messiah* was come, the Sceptre was to depart from *Judah*, and there were no more to be any Law in force amongst that People, who had been so long known under that Denomination, which they receiv'd from him. And this Prophecy of *Jacob*, in which he foretels the Condition of the several Tribes, has a plain Reference to the Promised Land, and is to be understood of the *Jewish* Government in the Land of *Canaan*, for he there describes the Borders of it. From the time that they were in Possession of that Land, the People of the *Jews* never had lost all their Right and Title to it, before the coming of Christ, but still retain'd their Right, during their Abode in *Babylon*, and were assur'd that they should again be put in Possession after a Captivity of seventy Years; and in Token of this, *Jeremiah* purchased a Field of *Hanameel*, his Uncle's Son, and subscribed and sealed the Writings, and took Witnesses and paid down the Money publickly before all the *Jews* that sat in the Court of the Prison, and the Evidences were to be kept in an Earthen Vessel. For thus saith the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel, Houses, and Fields, and Vineyards shall be possessed again in this Land. Jer. xxxii. 14. But when the time of *Jacob's* Prophecy was expir'd, and *Shiloh* was come, they were driven out, never to be restor'd again. The *Romans*, the most Generous of any People, dealt so hardly with no other Nation, as with the

*Jews*.



*The Reasonableness and Certainty*

*Jews*, who yet had to do with one of the most merciful Princes, that stands upon Record in History. If *Tiberius*, or *Caligula*, or *Nero* had destroyed them, it might have been ascrib'd to the Cruelty of their Temper; but when *Titus*, who endeavour'd to save them, was by their own Obstinacy forc'd upon their Destruction, after they had by their Dissentions made themselves a Prey to him, there was the visible Hand of God in it; as *Josephus* often confesses, and as *Titus* himself declar'd, when he beheld the Towers and Fortifications, after the City was taken. If they could have agreed either in their own Defence, or in any Terms of Submission to him, they would have been far from suffering in that Extremity. When *Pompey* and *Crassus* entred *Jerusalem*, the time of its Destruction was not yet come, but it was reserv'd to *Titus*, whose peculiar Character it was, that he oblig'd all Men, and who was stil'd the *Love and Delight of Mankind*, unwillingly to do that, which neither *Pompey* nor *Crassus* would do. It is well urg'd by a <sup>(k)</sup> Learned *Jew*, tho' he makes a wrong Inference from it. Did the same thing, says he, befall any other People? Did the *Romans* drive the *Germans*, the *Britains*, the *Gauls*, the *Spaniards*, the *Greeks*, or the *Asiatick* Nations into Captivity, and disperse them thro'out all Parts of the World? They rather endeavour'd to preserve them, that their several Countries might not want Inhabitants.

(k) Secundum scriptum *Fusus dei* apud *Limbroch.*

And

And tho' the *Jews* have been generally observ'd to have great Riches in the Nations where they live, they have never been able by any power or interest to get themselves Re-establish'd in their Country and Government, but have been disappointed as often as they have attempted it, tho' with never so much probability of success. So evident it is by the experience of so many Ages, that however it fares with particular persons of that Nation, yet they never are to be united again, as a Community, or Body of People to live under their ancient Laws, according to the Mosaical Constitution. They have no City, no Government, nor ever are to have any; and therefore those Laws can now no longer be in force, which suppose the continuance of their Government. Their Genealogies are lost, upon which the distinction of their Tribes and Families, and the Succession of their Priesthood did depend: So that they are without an Altar, without a Priest, without a Sacrifice, and without any possibility of knowing the Descent and Lineage of their *Messiah*, whom they expect to come; and by consequence cannot know him, if he should come, having no way to distinguish that Tribe and Family of which the Prophecies declare the *Messiah* was to be. In the *Babylonian* Captivity there were *Αἰχμαλωταὶ*, who kept up Order and Government amongst them; and that besides was at the most but a suspension of their Power, it was

no utter extirpation of all Rule and Authority; their Genealogies were preserved, and the distinction of their Tribes and Families known; their deliverance out of that Captivity, with the time and manner of it, and the very Name of their Deliverer was foretold; *Isa* xliv. 28. *Jer.* xxv. 12. *Dan.* ix. 2. And in that Captivity they had Prophets to direct and support them under their affliction, and give them assurance of a Restoration, but now they do not so much as pretend to have any. The Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of the *Egyptian* Bondage was likewise foretold, with the punctual time of it, *Gen.* xv. 13, 14. And in general, God declares that when at any time for their Sins they were led into Captivity, and dispersed among the Heathens, tho' they were driven unto the utmost part of Heaven, yet upon their Repentance he would *turn their Captivity, and have compassion upon them, and would return and gather them from all the Nations, whither he had scattered them,* *Deut.* xxx. 2, 3. *Neh.* i. 8, 9. And this Promise must have been in force, as long as their Law and Constitution lasted, and could have no limitation but the final and determined period of it. The time for the duration of the *Jewish* Law and Government being expired, all promises made to them as a distinct People and Nation, must be expired with it; whereas if their Law were still in force, the promise of their being restored to their Land and Government would undoubtedly

doubtedly before this time have been fulfilled to them. For, besides that their Sins at their return from their Captivity in *Babylon* were very great, it cannot be supposed, that for so many Ages their Sins should hinder that a Remnant at least should not be restored, if the *Jewish* Oeconomy had not received its final period in the destruction of their City and Nation.

(1) *Redde statum Judææ, quem Christus invēniat, & alium contende venire.* This, which (1) Tertul. adv. Judæos, c. 13. was a good Argument in *Tertullian's* time, is improved still in every Age since. For if the State of the *Jewish* Nation was not such then as their *Messiah* was to find at his coming, there is the less cause for them after so long time to hope that they shall ever be restored to such a Condition, as to have any reason to expect him.

III. After the coming of the *Messiah* the *Jewish* Law was to become impracticable, and impossible to be observ'd. For if the City and Temple were not destroy'd, the confinement of the *Jewish* Worship to one certain Place must necessarily imply an alteration in their Worship upon the coming of the *Messiah*, and the calling of the *Gentiles*; who could not all be supposed to assemble thence every year at *Jerusalem*; and therefore the Prophets foretold, That *Jerusalem* should then be no longer the only place of God's Worship, but that Men should Worship him in any place of the World. 'Tis true, the Prophets often mention the re-

fort which should be made from all Nations to *Jerusalem*, and to the Temple, or the *Mountain of the Lord*. But then these are Mystical Expressions; for the City of *Jerusalem*, and the Temple, are used by the Prophets as Types of the Christian Church; and therefore *Ezekiel*

(m) Light-foot's Prospect of the Temple, ch. 2.

(m) describes the Temple larger than the whole City of *Jerusalem*, and the City in greater dimensions than all the Land of *Canaan*, to shew that we are not to understand these Expressions literally. A Priesthood after the Order of *Mekhizedeck*, different from that of *Aaron* was Prophefied of, *Psal. cx. 4.* and a New Covenant different from that which was made with the Children of *Israel* upon their coming out of the Land of *Aegypt*, *Jer. xxxi. 31, 32.* And this Covenant was to extend to the *Gentiles*, as well as to the *Jews*. For from the rising of the Sun, even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the *Gentiles*: and in every place Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure offering: for my Name shall be great among the *Fleathen*, saith the Lord of Hosts, *Malach. i. 11.*

If against all this it be alledged, That the *Mosaical Law* was to endure for ever, it ought to be considered what sense that expression bears in the Law it self. And that expression is there used to denote the continuance of any thing which was not designed for some particular occasion or season only, but was to last as long as the nature and general design of its Institution

tion would admit: The Servant whose Ear was bored, was to serve his Master *for ever*, *Exod. xxi. 6.* by which is to be understood, not all his Life, but only till the year of Jubilee; whereas he that had not his Ear bored, was to be set free in the seventh year, *ver. 2.* And even before the year of Jubilee, he whose Ear was bored, might be freed with his Master's Consent; (n) either by Manumission, (n) *Grot. ad loc.* or Redemption, and was at liberty upon the death of his Master, not being bound to serve his Son. *Their anointing shall surely be an everlasting Priesthood throughout their Generations, Exod. xl. 15.* which can be understood to extend no farther, than as long as their Genealogies were preserved, and the Tribe and Generations of the High-Priests could be distinguished. *I will abide in thy Tabernacle for ever, Ps. lxi. 4.* or, in other words, *all the days of my Life, Ps. xxvii. 4.* Samuel was brought by his Mother to abide before the Lord *for ever*; that is, during his Life, *1 Sam. i. 22.* And by parity of Reason those Statutes and Laws are said to be Established *for ever*, which were designed to be perpetual and standing Laws; not temporary, during their journeying in the Wildernes only as others were, but to continue as long as the Constitution of the Government was to last; (o) *Id. de Veritat. Lib. 5. §. 7.* and in this sense the Jews themselves (o) have taken the word; and it is sufficiently explain'd *Deut. xii. 1. These are the Statutes and Judgments*



*which ye shall observe to do in the Land, which the Lord God of thy Fathers giveth thee to possess it all the days that ye live upon the Earth; or as we read ver. 19. as long as thou livest upon thy earth; that is, their Law was obligatory to them as long as they had possession of the Land of Canaan, or retained any right to possess it by God's donation: But those Statutes and Judgments which were to be observed in the Land which the Lord had given them to possess, can no longer be of any obligation to them, when they are finally deprived of that Land.*

The Ceremonial Law therefore by its Original Design and Institution being to continue in force but till the coming of Christ, he gave the accomplishment to it, and put a final period to its Obligation, Instituting his Gospel in its stead, which had been pre-figured by the Law, and foretold both by *Moses* and the Prophets.

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## C H A P. XVII.

### *Of Sinful Examples Recorded in the Scriptures.*

**A**S some have endeavour'd to excuse their own Sins by alledging the Sinful Examples which we find mention'd in the Scriptures;

so others, who are no less fond of imitating them, yet have from hence taken a pretence for Objections and Cavils. I shall therefore shew, that the bad Examples in some actions of Men whom we find in all other respects commended in the Scriptures, are far from being proposed for our imitation; but there is great reason why the Faults and Miscarriages of the best Men should be deliver'd down to us in the Scriptures for our Caution and Prevention, as well as upon other accounts.

I. Several passages of the Scriptures contain only Matter of Fact, and that very briefly express'd; and a bare Narrative of any Action, implies neither the Approbation nor the Censure of it, but only declares that such a thing was done, and in such a manner: but the Nature of the Fact it self, with the Circumstances of it, or some Command or Permission, or Prohibition in Scripture, must discover the goodness or lawfulness, or the wickedness of the Action. No Historian is supposed to approve of all which he relates; but he must report bad as well as good Déeds, who will do the part of a faithful Historian.

II. The Rules of Good and Evil are plainly delivered in the Scriptures, by which we are to judge of Actions; and we are to conform our Actions not to the Example of Men, but to the Law of God. We are forewarn'd to follow no Man's Example, when it is contrary to the Divine Law; and therefore it could not be ne-

cessary in the relating of every evil Action to set a mark of Infamy upon it, and a Caution against the imitation of it.

III. The Relation of the bad Actions of Good Men may be of great use and benefit, tho' we are not to follow, but avoid them; Because,

1. This shews the sincerity of the Pen-Men of the Scriptures, that they spare no person whatsoever, but relate the plain Matter of Fact, even tho' themselves be concern'd, when it is never so much to their disgrace; as in the Denial of *St. Peter*, and other instances.

2. By this we learn the Frailty of Humane Nature, and the necessary dependance that the best Men must have upon God for his Grace in the performing any good Action; *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, Jam. i. 17.*

3. We learn from hence, that God can bring Good out of Evil, and doth often over-rule even the worst Actions to the accomplishment of the best Ends, and putteth no Trust in his Saints, *Job xv. 15.*

There is a Remarkable Instance to this purpose in the Case of *Jacob* and *Esau*, when *Jacob* came by fraud and subtilty and depriv'd his Brother of the Blessing. (p) It was in Ancient times customary to offer that of which they were to eat, in Sacrifice, especially on so Solemn an Occasion, as a Father's giving his final Blessing; and as in this Case, foretelling  
th e

(p) Casaub.  
in Achenz.  
Lib. 1.  
c. 11.

the Fate of his Posterity : And therefore when *Jacob* had by subtilty got the Blessing of his Father, *Isaac* could not recall it to conferr it upon *Esau*, because what was done in so solemn a manner had a Religious Obligation amounting to that of an Oath ; and Oaths tho' obtain'd by fraud were Obligatory, as we learn from the Case of the *Gibeonites*, he had *blessed Jacob before the Lord* ; and the Prediction that *the Elder should serve the Younger*, Gen. xxv. 23. with *Esau's* despising and selling his Birth-right might now probably come into *Isaac's* Mind ; whereupon, tho' he did not approve of the fraud by which the Blessing was obtain'd, yet he knew it to be irrevocable, and that the Divine Purpose and Prediction would be accomplish'd thereby ; and what he had by a Prophetick Spirit conferr'd, it was not in his power to recall. The Relation therefore of this Matter doth not justify *Jacob's* behaviour in it, but manifests the over-ruling Providence of God, to make any Means whatsoever instrumental to his gracious Ends, which can never be disappointed by any Actions of Men : for if they depended upon humane Actions, these would often fail them ; the best Men being subject to so much frailty and sin.

4. Tho' God of his Mercy doth accept of the imperfect Services of the Righteous, forgiving upon their habitual Repentance the Sins and Frailties which are mix'd with the best Actions ; and pardoning the worst Actions likewise

likewise after a particular Repentance and Amendment of Life: yet these stand upon Record for the glory of God's grace in their Repentance and Forgiveness, and for a memorial and warning to future Ages; that Men may neither presume upon their own Righteousness, nor despair of God's Mercy. But because they are pardon'd, they are not always censur'd. And I think the ill Actions of Good Men are seldom or never mention'd with a mark of God's displeasure, unless the Series of the History require it; and then the reproof is mention'd, which pass'd at the time of the Commission of them; as in the Case of *David*, of *Hezekiah*, and *St. Peter*. But where no such Censure was pass'd at the time of the Action, the Action it self is barely related, and nothing further said of it; because the Crime being forgiven, God forbears to shew any further displeasure against it; such is his Mercy to Repenting Sinners. And there could be no necessity, as I have observ'd, for any Censure upon the account of others, who may know by the plain Rule of God's word what Actions are sinful, tho' they are not always styl'd so in relating the Commission of them.

C H A P. XVIII.

*Of the Imprecations in the Psalms, and  
other Books of the Old Testament.*

**O**NE of the greatest Excellencies of the Christian Religion is the Universal Charity which it enjoyns; and we shall find that Charity was likewise the Doctrine of the Old Testament, and that there is nothing in the Book of *Psalms*, or any other part of the Old Testament, contrary to this Doctrine; which will appear, if we consider the peculiar Reasons for those expressions, which may seem to imply any thing contrary to it.

I. Many of those Expressions are used in reference to the Nations, upon whom after signal Acts of Mercy and Forbearance on his part, and repeated provocations on theirs, God had commanded the *Israelites* to execute his Judgments; and the Sins of the People of *Israel* were the cause that this was not accomplish'd: and therefore it was lawfull for them to pray that they might have grace to repent, and that their Sins might be no hindrance to them in the fulfilling his will; but that God would enable them *to execute vengeance upon the Heathen*, *Pf, cxlix. 7.* And it was lawful likewise to pray against all the other Enemies of God, that he would ~~abase~~ *abase* their Pride, and make them

to



*to know themselves to be but Men, Pl. ix. 20. lxxiv. 22, 23. cxxxix. 21, 22.*

II. *David* being King, had the Sword of Justice committed to him, he was *the Minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that did evil*; and therefore when his Rebellious Subjects were too strong for him, as in the Rebellion of *Abalom*, he might make his Appeal to God, and beseech him to take the matter into his own hand. If he might punish his Subjects, he might pray to God that he would enable him to do it. And in Foreign Wars, if he might kill his Enemies, he might pray for Victory and Success over them.

III. It is lawful to pray that publick and notorious Malefactors may be punish'd, for it is lawful to discover them, and bring them to punishment; and it must needs be lawful to pray that that may be done, which it is lawful for us to do. It is lawful to seek redress of private Injuries, and therefore it is lawful to pray that they may be redress'd; for we may pray for success upon any honest undertaking. If this be done out of a love to Justice, and a necessary care of our own preservation; not out of malice, and a thirst after Revenge, but with the most favourable construction that the worst Actions are capable of, and with hearty Prayers to God for his Blessing upon the Offender; in giving him the grace of Repentance, and granting him whatsoever happiness in this World

World may be consistent with the honour of God, and Justice towards other Men, and the Salvation of his own Soul.

IV. God was the peculiar Law-giver, and Political Governour of the *Jews*; and Temporal Rewards and Punishments were the Sanction of the Laws which he had given them. For the *Mosaical Law* is called *the ministration of Death*, and *the Ministration of Condemnation*, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. because the promises of the Law, as *such*, belong'd only to this Life, and a Curse was denounc'd against every one, *that continu'd not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10, 11. God had expressly threatned to inflict Punishment in this Life, for the transgression of those Laws; and therefore to pray to God that his Judgments might overtake Evil-doers, was no more than it is in other Governments, to prosecute Offenders before the Magistrate, they appealed to God to put his Laws in force against them, and not to suffer the wicked to go unpunish'd in contempt of those Laws, which he had appointed, and under that dispensation which was establish'd upon Temporal Rewards and Punishments. They were not allow'd to indulge their anger and desire of Revenge, yet they might pray that God would avenge himself of his Enemies, and rescue his Laws from that contempt which they must lie under from wicked Men, if they did not feel those punishments which the Laws of God threatned them withall.

But

But under the Gospel the Case is different ; for now we are not to expect that Temporal Rewards and Punishments should constantly follow upon the performance or transgression of our Duty ; but both of them may be commonly reserved to a future State. A Christian may not pray for Judgments upon his Enemies, because God has not so peremptorily declared by the Gospel, that he will inflict his Punishments in this Life, as he had done by the Law, and we have our Saviour's Command and Example to pray for their Repentance, that they be not punished in the next. But a Christian may right himself in due course of Law ; and in order to that, may Petition the Judge without any breach of Charity ; and this was all that the *Jews* did, when they pray'd God to execute his own Laws, by inflicting such Punishments as he had threatned to inflict upon the Transgressors of them in this Life : they invoked and appealed to God as their Political Judge and Sovereign, and pray'd Judgment against Offenders.

V. Those which seem Imprecations, are oftentimes Predictions or Denunciations of Judgments to come upon Sinners ; as we may learn from *Acts* 1. 20. And it can be no uncharitableness to foretell or denounce God's Judgments against Sinners, but rather an effect of Charity towards them for their Repentance, and Amendment.

Most

Most of those places of Scripture may as properly be rendred by way of prediction in the Future Tense; and when they cannot, they may be look'd upon as denunciations of God's Wrath. For Prophets were sometimes employ'd to execute the Divine Judgments, as we see in *Elijah*, 2 *Kings* i. 9, 10. and as they sometimes executed God's Judgments, so they at other times denounced them; and this had nothing of uncharitableness in it, but is fully agreeable with the Gospel it self. For thus we read that *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were punished with present death by *St. Peter*, *Acts* v. But if *St. Peter* had denounced Death without inflicting it immediately upon them, this had been less. And *St. Paul* prays that the Lord would reward *Alexander the Copper-Smith* according to his works, who had done him much evil, 2 *Tim.* iv. 14. which was no uncharitable imprecation, but a leaving him to God's Judgment, and a denunciation of punishment to befall him without Repentance; it was an Authoritative Act, and in consequence of that excommunication which the Apostle had inflicted upon him, 1 *Tim.* i. 20. And when God had inspired and empower'd Men to denounce Judgments, this was no more against Charity, than the inflicting of them would have been, or than Excommunication it self is. If Magistrates are empower'd in the King's Name to give Sentence, and to inflict Punishments, certainly Men may be so empower'd and authoriz'd

thoriz'd by God himself, and may act or speak accordingly, without breach of Charity.

VI. The Expressions *Pf. lxxix. and cix.* are to be understood concerning *Judas*, as we find them applied, *Acts 1.* and all other Expressions of the same nature may be understood either of him, or of some others like him, whom the *Psalmist* by inspiration might know to be hardned in Sin, past Repentance, and therefore might pray that God would rather cut them off, than suffer them to do more mischief in this World, and increase the number of their Iniquities here, and of their Miseries in the World to come.

VII. Lastly, This Supposition is tacitly emply'd in Imprecations, if they will persist in their Sins, if they will not repent; and the Penmen of the Holy Scriptures might in some Cases know by Revelation; that Judgments were the only means to reclaim those Men against whom they pray'd, and then it was the greatest Charity to pray that God would be pleas'd to make use of that Remedy, which alone was left for their Amendment; as *Psal. lxxxiii. 15, 16. So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame: that they may seek thy Name, O Lord.*

There is nothing therefore inconsistent with the Doctrine of Charity, and the Love of our Neighbour in those places of Scripture, which have been liable to the mistakes of unwary Men.

Men. For either they are Prayers to God to enable the *Israelites* to do what he had appointed, as in the destruction of the *Canaanites*, whom God was pleased for wise and great Reasons to punish by the Sword of the Children of *Israel*, rather than by Pestilence, or any other Judgment. Or they are Prayers to God to assist them in the doing what both Justice and Charity will allow to be done, either by Persons in Authority, as King *David*, or even by private Men; as in the prosecution of Offenders, and bringing them to condign punishment; and this may be without any degree of Malice, or the least breach of Charity; since Punishment it self may be not only an act of Justice but of Charity likewise towards divers Men. Or these Expressions may be Appeals to God as the Political Governour and Legislator of the *Jews*: Or they are Predictions or Denunciations of God's wrath against Sinners. And they may be directed against impenitent obstinate Men hardened in their Wickedness. Or, lastly, they may be only Prayers to God, that he would inflict such Punishments upon Men, as may bring them to Repentance.

And tho' the *Jews* in latter Ages perverted some passages of their Law to serve their own Pride and Revenge; yet, as it is evident by many instances, never any Law but that of Christ oblig'd Men to more Humanity towards Strangers, or more Charity towards Enemies. They were certainly to Covet no Man's House



or Wife, and therefore the word *Neighbour* is not to be limited to signify only an *Israelite* or a *Profelyte*, but is to be understood of any Man whatsoever, *Exod. xx. 17. Thou shalt love him (the Stranger) as thy self. Lev. xix. 34.* The *Egyptians* are stiled the Neighbours of the *Israelites*, *Exod. xi. 2.* And *Pf. xv. 2, 3.* where acts of common Justice towards Neighbours are spoken of; by *Neighbour* must necessarily be understood any person, for to all Men Justice is due. Not only Justice but Charity was enjoynd towards Enemies. *If thine Enemy be hungry give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee, Prov. xxv. 21, 22.* which words so fully express our Duty of Christian Charity, that *St. Paul* could find none fitter to describe it by, *Rom. xii. 20.* and *Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.* *If thou meet thine Enemies Ox or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burthen, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.* And in divers other places of the Old Testament, Charity towards Enemies is highly recommended, and earnestly inculcated, *Job xxxi. 29. Prov. xx. 22. xxiv. 29. Malach. ii. 10. Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self,* we read, *Lev. xix. 18.* but *thou shalt hate thine Enemy,* is no where to be found in the Old Testament; and therefore *Matt. v. 43.* it is to be taken as a false

false gloss of the Interpreters of the Law, which our Saviour rejects; unless it be to be meant, as *Grotius* understands it, of that enmity which the Jews were to shew in all acts of Hostility towards the seven Nations of *Canaan*, and the *Amalekites*, *Exod.* xvii. 16. xxxiv. 11. *Deut.* vii. 1. xxv. 19. yet these very Nations were not utterly excluded from becoming Proselytes; and to me it seems very remarkable, that tho' the Children of *Israel* had receiv'd such hard and cruel usage in *Egypt*, which is so often mention'd in the Law of *Moses*, they were nevertheless by the same Law commanded not to abhor an *Egyptian*, but to admit the Children of *Egyptian* Parents into the Congregation of the Lord in the third Generation. Thou shalt not abhor an *Egyptian*, because thou wast a Stranger in his Land, *Deut.* xxiii. 7. Thou shalt not abhor him, that is, thou shalt not revenge upon him the injuries done thee, but shalt relieve him in time of distress; which

(q) Charity the Jews ever held themselves oblig'd to extend to the *Gentiles*; and there is reason to suspect that they have been wrong'd in the reports of their uncharitableness to all of other Nations; but any thing is easily believ'd of a hated and despis'd People. And I am not to vindicate their Practice, but their Law.

(q) Lightf.  
Hebr. &  
Talmud.  
Exercit. on  
Matt. vi. 2.

(r) *Philo Judæus* has an excellent Treatise, in which he discourseth at large upon this Subject, and shews to how great Humanity and Charity the Jews were oblig'd by the Law of *Moses*.

(r) Philo  
Jud. mel  
φιλαυθρ-  
μας.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Of the Texts of the Old Testament cited  
in the New.*

**T**H<sup>O</sup> the Apostles having prov'd their Divine Commission by so many and so undeniable Miracles had an infallible Authority to interpret and apply the Texts of the Old Testament in confirmation of the Gospel; yet it is not to be doubted, but that the Citations, which seem to have most difficulty in them; are such as that the *Jews* of that time, against whom they were urged, could not but acknowledge that the Apostles gave the true Exposition of them, tho' they deny'd that they were truly apply'd to our Saviour, and his Gospel. For unless the Apostles had either made out their Citations from the Old Testament by Maxims and Principles then known and receiv'd among the *Jews*, or had alledg'd them in such a sense, as was then generally acknowledged, it had been to no purpose to alledge them at all against them.

It is known likewise and observable upon this occasion, that after the Captivity in *Babylon*, tho' the Bible was read in the Synagogues in the Original Hebrew, yet it was also interpreted into the vulgar Language, and the Interpreter did not always Translate the Text verbatim, but often gave the sense of it in different words, and with some latitude, to render it

it the more intelligible. This way of Interpretation was at length improv'd into a *Chaldee* Paraphrase, containing with the Text a short explication of it according to the sense of the most Learned among the *Jews*, tho' there must be supposed to have been many Notions current among them, which would not be brought within the compass of that Exposition. The Writers therefore of the New Testament might sometimes give such an Interpretation of the Texts of the Old Testament, as was as well, or better known among them for whom they wrote, than the *Greek* or *Hebrew* Text was; or they might take upon themselves the liberty of Interpreters, the better to explain the Texts alledged, and enforce their Arguments.

Thus for instance, *St. Stephen, Acts vii.* would never have produc'd any thing out of the Old Testament before the *Sanhedrim*; nor would *St. Luke* have Recorded it soon after, if it had been capable of any disproof or confutation, whatever difficulties at this distance of time there may appear to us to be in it. And so in all other Cases, we may depend upon it, that the Apostles and other Disciples, who had such demonstrative Evidence for the conviction of Unbelievers by a constant power of Miracles, would never make use of any Arguments to the *Jews* from the Old Testament, but such as they well knew their Adversaries could never be able to disprove or deny. For there were then certain

(1) Joseph.  
Bell.  
Fadric.lib.  
iii. c. 14.

Methods of Interpretation, as we learn from (s) *Josephus*, which are now lost, and they disputed from acknowledg'd Maxims and Rules: the only difference and matter of dispute was in the application of them to their particular case; however our ignorance of things, then generally known, may now make it difficult to reconcile some Texts of the New Testament with those of the Old, from whence they were cited.

(t) Sim.  
Crit. Hist.  
of the N. T.  
Part I.  
C. xxi.

F. *Simon* (t) in his Critical History, has a remarkable Passage upon this Subject. "The Book, says he, where the most of that sort of Citations are found, is the Epistle of St. Paul to the *Hebrews*, where we find nothing else but passages of the Old Testament explain'd in a manner that is altogether Allegorical, and foreign to the Letter; which has also given an occasion to some Writers to suspect, that St. Paul was not the Author. But it seems on the contrary, that if we reflect upon the *Pharisees* Method in their expounding Scripture, it cannot be attributed to any other than to that holy Apostle, who having studied in *Jerusalem* under the Doctor *Gamaliel*, did penetrate into all the most refined points of their secret and mystical Interpretations of the Bible. And indeed after I had recommended the reading of this Epistle to a Jew, who was well read in his own ancient Authors, he having perused it, freely declar'd, that it must needs have been writ-

"ten

(u) A Man  
of Tradition.

"ten by some great (u) Mekubal of his own  
"Nation. And he was so far from telling me  
"that St. Paul had wrested the true sense of  
"Scripture with his Allegories at pleasure,  
"that he extolled his profound Skill in the  
"sublime sense of the Bible, and always re-  
"turn'd to his great Mekubal, of whom he ne-  
"ver spake but with admiration.

*Hoc in omnibus scripturis sanctis observandum  
est Apostolos & Apostolicos viros in ponendis Te-  
stimoniis de veteri Testamento, non verba con-  
siderare, sed sensum, nec eadem Sermonum culcare  
vestigia, dummodo à sententiis non recedant,  
Hieron. in Amos. c. v.*

*Ex quo perspicuum est Apostolos & Evangeli-  
stas, & ipsum Dominum salvatorem—ex He-  
bræo transferre quod legerint, non curantes de  
syllabis punctisq; verborum, dummodo senten-  
tiarum veritas transferatur, Id. in Malach.  
c. iii.*

## CHAP. XX.

### Of the Incarnation and Death of the Son of God.

**T**HIS is that Article of our Faith, which  
was to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and  
to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. and has  
ever been most liable to the Objections of In-



fidels: and therefore I shall take the more care to give the clearest and fullest account I can of it.

I. I shall here consider the necessity of the Incarnation of the Son of God, for the satisfaction of the Justice, and the vindication of the honour of God.

II. Tho' it should be suppos'd, that God could have pardon'd the Sins of Men upon any other terms, than the death and satisfaction of his own Son in our Flesh; I hope fully to prove, that this is so far from being unworthy of God, that no other way of our Reconciliation with him (as far as we are able to apprehend) could have been so becoming the Divine Wisdom and Goodness.

I. There seems to have been a necessity for the Incarnation of the Son of God, for the satisfaction of God's Justice, and the vindication of his Honour. For God is Infinite Justice as well as Infinite Mercy; and Infinite Justice must punish Offenders, unless full satisfaction be made for the Offence; because Infinite Justice must demand to the utmost extent of Justice, and must require whatsoever can in Justice be demanded. But Infinite Mercy found out a Means to satisfy this Infinite Justice; which Satisfaction could be made only by the Obedience and by the Death of the Son of God, who by his *Obedience unto Death, even the Death of the Cross*, vindicated the Honour of God, by performing in our Nature a perfect and absolute

lute Obedience to all that ever God required of Mankind, and by suffering to the utmost of all that the Sins of the whole World deserv'd. It is for the Honour of God, that his Laws should be exactly observ'd, and observ'd by one who is of that very Nature, for which they were ordain'd; and that Satisfaction should be made in the same Nature for the Sins of it: Christ therefore taking our Nature upon him paid down *the uttermost Farthing*, which in strictness of Justice must have been demanded, but which could never have been paid by any Created Being, for the Sins of the whole World: And he *fulfill'd all Righteousness* in Obedience to the Divine Laws, which otherwise could never have been fully obey'd. And as far as God's Justice and Honour was concern'd to see his Laws obey'd, and to demand satisfaction for the breach of them; so far the Incarnation of the Son of God must be necessary, because these things could be perform'd by no Creature.

2. Tho' it should be suppos'd that God could have pardon'd the Sins of Men upon other Terms than the death and satisfaction of his own Son in our flesh, yet the Incarnation and Death of his Son is so far from implying any thing unworthy of God, that no other way of our Reconciliation with him (as far as we can apprehend) could so much have become the Divine Wisdom and Goodness.

*First,*

*First,* There is nothing in this whole Dispensation unworthy of God. Here I am to consider that which was the great prejudice taken against the Christian Religion at its first Propagation, and is still the great Objection of the Enemies of the Gospel of Christ, and of their own Salvation. They are apt to represent it to themselves as an unnecessary thing, and unworthy of God, that he should send his only begotten Son into the World for the Redemption of Mankind; they imagine that the Infinite Wisdom of God could have found out other Methods of Salvation for us, and that this would never have been made use of, if there could have been any other.

It might be enough in Answer to such Objections, to say with the Apostle; *nay, but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the Person saved, say unto him that saved him, why hast thou saved me thus?* will we not be contented to be saved, unless we can be fully certified in all the Reasons and Methods of our Salvation? May not God bring to pass our Redemption in such a way as he shall see fitting, or shall we question his Wisdom, if his Mercy be so much greater than we can comprehend? How infinite is his Mercy, and how monstrous our ingratitude, if his goodness be made an objection against the truth of his word, and be alledg'd as an Argument for our Unbelief? *What if God willing to shew the heinousness of Sin, and to make known the riches*  
of

of his Mercy, chose this way for the Redemption of the World? What if many Reasons may be given why this Method was the most proper and expedient; and what if there might be infinitely greater and better Reasons for it, than all the wisdom of Man can conceive?

But tho' the Revealed will and Counsel of God ought to silence all Disputes in this as well as in all other Cases; yet I think this Objection is capable of a very plain and direct Answer. For whatever weight there may seem to be in it, it is all grounded upon a Mistake, and upon a wrong Notion of the Union between the Divine and the Humane Nature of Christ. For if the Godhead be not so united to the Manhood as to suffer with it, there is no imaginable Reason why its Union with the Manhood should be supposed to be unworthy of God. I shall therefore

1. Shew the unreasonableness of this Supposition, that the Union of the Divine and Humane Nature in Christ should cause the Godhead to suffer with the Manhood.

2. I will prove that the Humiliation of the Son of God in assuming our Nature, may be accounted for without supposing that the Godhead suffer'd.

3. That the satisfaction of Christ by dying for our Sins may be explain'd without it.

I. The unreasonableness of this supposition, that the Union of the Divine and Humane Nature in Christ should cause the Godhead to suffer

suffer with the Manhood. This Objection supposes the Godhead to be so united to the Manhood in the Person of our Saviour, as that the Divine Nature must really and properly partake in all the Sufferings which befell his Person. It supposes, that Christ, as God, suffer'd the Miseries of Humane Life, and at last underwent Death upon the Cross; which is so far from being the Doctrine of the Gospel, that it is no better than Herefie and Blasphemy, and has always been rejected and condemned as such by the Catholick Church. That the Union of the Godhead with the Manhood, should render the Godhead capable of Sufferings, as the Soul by being united to the Body becomes sensible of its pains, is indeed a thing not only unworthy of God, but impossible to conceive. The Immortal and ever-blessed God can be subject to nothing of passion or frailty. The Godhead is incapable of any imperfection, and therefore incapable of receiving any impressions of Sufferings from the Humane Nature, as the Soul doth from the Body of Man. So that tho' the Union between the Divine and Humane Nature in Christ be fitly explain'd by that between the Soul and the Body in Man, yet the manner of acting is very different. For Finite Beings can mutually act and be acted upon by each other in their several actions and passions; but the Divine Nature of Christ being impassible, could suffer nothing by all that was inflicted on the Humane,

Humane, but remain'd infinitely Happy and Glorious under all the Torments and Agonies endur'd by our Saviour both in his Soul and Body.

As God is pleas'd to aid and assist and support innocent and good Men in their sufferings, and to direct and conduct them thro' the course of their Lives: So God was not only present with the Humane Nature of Christ, but was so united to it, as to become one Person with it; which, since the Godhead could suffer nothing from it, is no more unworthy of God, than if he had only guided him with his Spirit, as he did the Prophets without any personal Union. There is no inconvenience or absurdity in believing that God should by the most intimate and personal Union become united to a Man, who did weep, and bleed, and die. For as God by this Union did not change the Nature he had assumed, or prevent the Sufferings of it, so he did not partake in them. No Man can deny upon Principles of Philosophy, but that it is very reasonable to believe, that God may afford a more peculiar presence to one Man than to another, and that this Man may yet be subject to Afflictions; and therefore the Son of God might become united to the Soul and Body of Christ in as intimate a manner as the Soul and Body are united to each other in us; and yet this union of the Divine Nature might not preserve the Humane from the Sufferings incident to the rest



rest of Mankind, but must leave it to submit to them, tho' they were never so grievous, when this was the very End and Design of the Union.

It was not below the Majesty of God to be Personally united to a most Innocent, and Sinless and Holy Man, tho' he was a Suffering and Afflicted Man; and it is not the Personal Union, as some are apt to conceive, which could be any diminution to God's Glory, but their own error and mistake, in what they surmise would be the consequence of such an Union.

II. The Humiliation of the Son of God in assuming our Nature may be accounted for, without supposing that the Godhead suffer'd. It was the greatest condescension and humiliation in the Son of God to take upon him our Nature: For it is a gracious and merciful condescension for him to take care of us by his Providence. *God humbleth himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and in the Earth*, Pl. cxliii. 6. But some times and in some places he is in a more peculiar manner present upon Earth, and that is an extraordinary condescension; tho' he is always the same in himself, and never the less present or the less happy in Heaven. But it was the most wonderful condescension in God to unite himself to our Humane Nature, and to become one Person with it, and so to die for us; tho' his Divine Nature did not and could not suffer, but only the Humane Nature

to which it is united. He was not ashamed to call Men his Brethren, and in all things to be made like unto his Brethren, Hebr. ii. 11, 17. but vouchsafed to assume our Nature in its lowest Condition, and to be so strictly and personally united to the most afflicted of all the Sons of Men, as to ascribe all his Sufferings to himself, for the benefit of all Mankind.

It is the Infinite Mercy of God to vouchsafe us the comfort of his presence in any way or measure: but it is the most astonishing and adorable act of his goodness, that he would be pleas'd so far to condescend, as to take our very Nature upon him, that he might be born, and might die for our sakes. And that which magnifies his mercy and goodness in the highest measure, is certainly most worthy of the good and merciful God.

III. The satisfaction of Christ by dying for our Sins, may be explain'd without supposing that the Godhead suffer'd. The Christian Faith is, *That as the Reasonable Soul and Flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ*; and that this Person consisting both of God and Man united, suffer'd for our Salvation: But that all the Sufferings were inflicted on the Humane Nature, and terminated in it. But by vertue of the Personal Union of his Divine with his Humane Nature, all Christ's Sufferings receiv'd an infinite value and merit, and became entituled and ascrib'd to God himself, because

because they were undergone by that Person, who is God as well as Man, tho' they were not undergone by him in his Divine, but only in his Humane Nature.

Thus God is said to have *purchased* ~~this~~ *his Church* with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. For Actions and Passions in any person are Personal, and are attributed to the whole person; and sometimes those Actions and Passions, which can be perform'd in one of those Natures only, which constitute a person, are yet attributed to the other Nature, which is incapable of them otherwise than by that relation which results from the union of both Natures; whereby all things that befall the person, may be affirmed of it as such, and therefore have respect to both the Natures, of which it consists, and may be apply'd to it, under the denomination of either of them. *All the Souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy Souls*, Exod. i. 5. *If a Soul touch any unclean thing*, Lev. v. 2. *And the Soul that eateth of it, shall bear his Iniquity*, Lev. vii. 18, 20. In these, and many other places of Scripture, Actions and Passions peculiar to the Body, are, by reason of the union of the Soul and Body, attributed to the Soul. Nay, both in the *Hebrew* and the *Greek Text* the Soul is sometimes put for the Body, even of a dead Man, *Lev. xxi. 11. xxii. 4.* in which sense (x) Bishop Pearson explains *Acts ii. 27. Ps. xvi. 10.*

(x) On the  
Creed,  
Art. v.

And

And in other places the Body or Flesh is often taken for the whole Man, and that is attributed to it, which the Flesh is of it self incapable of. The Flesh distinctly considered, and apart from the Soul can neither Sin, nor Pray, nor Understand, nor Worship, nor partake of the Spirit, nor be Justified; and yet all these things are ascribed to the Flesh, without any mention made of the Soul. *All Flesh had corrupted his way upon the Earth*, Gen. vi. 12. *O thou that hearest Prayer, unto thee shall all Flesh come*, Ps. lxxv. 2. *And all Flesh shall know, that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob*, Isa. xlix. 26. *All Flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord*, Isa. lxvi. 23. *And all Flesh shall see the Salvation of God*, Luke iii. 6. *I will pour out of my Spirit upon all Flesh*, Acts ii. 17. *Joel ii. 28. By the works of the Law shall no Flesh be justified*, Galat. ii. 16. And we say in our own Language, *any Body thinks, or any Body understands*; tho' we all know, it is the Soul, and not the Body, which thinks, and understands. It is very usual in other Books, and very agreeable to the stile of Scripture, and to the common speech and sense of Men, for those Actions of a Person to be attributed to one of the united Natures, which could be perform'd only in the other. And the Union between the Godhead and the Manhood being like that, which is between the Soul and the Body, the Son of God is said to have *Suffered*,

*ferred, and the Son of Man to have come down from Heaven ; not that the Godhead Suffered, or that the Humane Nature of Christ was in Heaven before his Incarnation, but according to the usual stile of Scripture, the Union between the Divine and Humane Natures entitles the Person consisting of them both, under the denomination of either Nature, to that which was done in the other, tho' as the Humane Nature did not partake of the perfections of the Divine ; so neither did the Divine Nature partake of the sufferings of the Humane. But both Natures being personally united, the person is sometimes denoted by one, and sometimes by the other Nature.*

All the Objections against the Incarnation of the Son of God proceed upon the like mistake with theirs, who are apt to imagine that it is unworthy of God to be every where, and in all places, to behold and be present at the worst of Actions ; as if the Sun's brightness would not be the more resplendent and glorious, if it could penetrate into the obscurest corners and recesses of the Earth ; or as if his Rays could be sullied and defiled by the foulness of any Object which they shine upon. And if it be no diminution to God's Infinite Glory and Majesty to be Omnipresent, it can be none to be more nearly and even Personally united to some part of the Creation ; and therefore it cannot be unworthy of God to be so united to the Humane Nature, to manifest  
his

his love and favour, and extend his goodness to Mankind. As God is every where present, so he is in a more especial manner present in some places than in others by the acts of his Power, or of his Grace and Favour; and he has vouchsafed a more especial presence to some Persons than to others; and thus he was present with his Prophets, who were sent to prepare for and foretell Christ's coming. But he was personally united to the Humane Nature of Christ. And this is the highest Honour and Advancement to our Nature, for God thus to assume it; but it can be no diminution to the Divine Majesty, because God continues as he was from all Eternity, without any alteration; only by his personal Presence and Union with our Humane Nature, he causes all the performances and sufferings of it to be meritorious, for the Salvation of Mankind.

The Son of God did not so come down from Heaven as to be no longer there, but to forsake his Father's Kingdom: He still continued in Heaven in the same Bliss and Glory, that he enjoy'd with his Father from all Eternity, tho' he so manifested himself to the World, as to come and abide in it by assuming our Humane Nature. Our Saviour tells *Nicodemus*, Joh. iii. 13. *No Man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* He who fills Heaven and Earth with his presence, was still in Heaven as much as ever, with respect



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to his Godhead, tho' he made a more peculiar residence than he had before done on Earth, by dwelling in our Nature here. The Son of God who is at all times every where present, is yet in a peculiar manner present, where-ever he is pleas'd to manifest himself by peculiar acts of his goodness and power, as he was pleas'd to do in a most stupendous manner in that Flesh which he took upon him of the Blessed Virgin. And it cannot be thought inconsistent with the Majesty of God to actuate the Humane Nature, and to be joyned in the most strict and vital union with it, supposing God only to act upon it, and not to be acted upon by it, nor to suffer the miseries and feel the pains which the Humane Nature endures (which would be Blasphemy to assert of the Divine Nature of Christ) but to be in Heaven still in his full Power and Majesty.

*But some Man will say,* how is this Union between the Divine and Humane Nature in Christ made, or wherein doth it consist? To whom we may reply, as our Saviour sometimes did to the *Scribes and Pharisees*, by asking another Question, and enquiring, how the Body and Soul in Man are united? or how God is present in all places? and how *in him we live, and move, and have our Being*? And if no Man can tell how these things are, tho' no Man can deny the truth and reality of them, then it is not to be expected, that we should be able to tell how the union between the Di-  
vine

vine and the Humane Nature in Christ is made, or in what it consists. We must acknowledge it a Mystery, which it is above any Man's capacity to explain; but that there is such an union, we learn from the Scriptures, and thither we appeal for the truth of it. And the putting such Questions, argues either a great mind to cavil, or great inconsideration, and shortness of thought. For what Man is there pretending to Reason and Argument, of so little observation, as not to take notice, that of all the things which we daily see and perceive to be in the World, the nature and manner of existence of very few or rather of none of them is fully understood by us? It is sufficient for us to know, that great Reasons may be given for this dispensation of the Son of God Incarnate, and that no Material Objection can be framed against it.

*Secondly*, No other way (as far as we can apprehend) could have been so proper and expedient, as the Incarnation of the Son of God, to procure the Salvation of Mankind, and therefore none could so well become the Divine Wisdom and Goodness. The proof of this must depend upon the Reasons for Christ's coming into the World, and they are all comprehended in this one thing, the abolishing or taking away of Sin. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our Sins, and in him is no Sin*, 1 Joh. iii. 5. We are to consider then, that the manifestation of Christ in the Flesh,

did more powerfully and effectually take away Sin, than any other way or means of Salvation could have done.

I. The Doctrine and Preaching of the Son of God had more Power and Authority with it, than the Preaching and Doctrine of a Man or Angel could have had. *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also he made the Worlds, Hebr. i. 1, 2.* Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiv'd a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? *Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3.* This being the last Message which God had resolv'd to send to Mankind, a Person of the greatest Dignity and Authority was to bring it: But last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, they will reverence my Son, *Matt. xxi. 37.* It is the last expedient, and the very utmost that could be done to reduce Sinners to Obedience; and if this will have no effect upon them, they must be left without all excuse. This is the heaviest aggravation of Sin, and that which renders Men utterly inexcusable; *he was in the World,*  
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and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not, Joh. i. 10, 11. If the only begotten Son of God had not come and manifested himself in so wonderful a manner to the World, something of a Plea might have been pretended; but to reject the Son of God was an evident despight done to the Father, and even *hating* of the *Father* who had sent him, as our Saviour declares, *Joh. xv. 22, 23, 24.* And the Blaspheming of the Holy Ghost in those, who vilified the Miracles of Christ, and ascribed them to Beelzebub, was therefore without forgiveness, because it was a rejecting of Christ, not as the Son of Man, but as God blessed for ever; and a despising and vilifying that which is the last means that can be used to reclaim the World; and that means whereby he manifested himself to be the Son of God. To reject Christ, was to reject the whole Trinity, which was jointly concern'd in this wonderful dispensation.

The Dignity of Christ's Person adds all the force and efficacy to his Doctrine that is possible; and therefore it was requisite that the Son of God should become incarnate. God had before spoken from Heaven, but that was too terrible and full of Majesty to be born by Mortals; and they that heard the voice, *entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: for they could not endure that which was Commanded; and so terrible was the sight,*



*that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake,* Heb. xii. 19, 20, 21. But now God was pleas'd to converse with Man in a more familiar and humble manner; and our Blessed Saviour came to live amongst Men with all the gentleness and meekness of the Humane Nature, and all the Authority of the Divine. *For in him dwelleth all the Fullness of the Godhead Bodily,* Colos. ii. 9. The Godhead dwelt here in him under our Humane Nature, laying aside that awful Majesty, which no Man can approach unto.

II. We have a greater Example of all perfection and Holiness set before us by the Son of God Incarnate, than we could otherwise have had. It has been the general complaint made of other Teachers and Lawgivers, that they seldom observe their own Rules, or live themselves according to what they require of others. But our Saviour has given us an Example, if it be possible, even beyond his own Doctrine. For tho' he be no rigorous Lawgiver, but a most indulgent and gracious Master to us, yet he was pleas'd to excuse himself from no Duty or Instance of Obedience, but fulfilled both the Moral and the Ceremonial Law: there is nothing so mean, nor so difficult and painful but he perform'd it, to set us an absolute Pattern of Obedience to the Whole Duty of Man, in all that ever God requir'd of Mankind. *It became him to fulfill all Righteousness;* this was the end and intention of his coming into the World,

World, and he fulfilled it in the most absolute and perfect manner, in all particulars. And to give such an Example, is of unspeakable use and benefit: for Men are more easily led by Example than by Precept; and it is commonly observ'd, that it is Example for the most part which governs the World. Men will follow the Vices of those whose Vertues they never imitate; and the Faults of Wise and Great Men have too sure and too fatal an effect upon such, as their Excellencies never reach.

It was necessary that an Example of absolute perfection should be given to the World, and this Example must be given by one of the same nature with our selves, or else it might have been an Example for Angels and Spirits, but not for Men; and therefore such an Example the Son of God Incarnate only could give, because it was impossible for any created Being under all the Infirmities and Temptations incident to Humane Nature to live up to such a Divine Height and Excellency of all perfection as our Saviour did, and to leave such an Example to the World.

He came not to teach us the wisdom of this World, how to get Riches and Honours; in this Mankind was well enough instructed before, and it could not but be unworthy of the Son of God to be Born into the World with a design to enjoy the pleasures and the profits, and the honours of it, this was beneath the Majesty of Heaven, and the Infinite Perfection  
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and Essential Bliss and Happiness of the Divine Nature. But to manifest himself, to shew the mean and worthless Vanity of those things, of which Men are so fond; to give an Example of Contentment in a low Condition, of Victory under Temptations and of Patience and Meekness under the severest Afflictions and Torments; to discover to Men the way to Happiness in the worst Circumstances of this World, to teach those who enjoy this World's goods, not to be proud of them, nor despise others, and those who want them; to be contented and happy without them, to lead Men in the way to happiness thro' all Conditions, thro' all the Miseries and Calamities which must befall many of us in this Mortal State; this is a Glorious and Godlike Design, it is such as none but the Son of God could perform, and such as we may in reason believe he would undertake; and for which he might vouchsafe to live a Humane Life upon Earth.

III. The Mediation and Intercession of Christ for us is of greater power and efficacy, than any could have been, if the Son of God had not become Man to die for our sakes. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. he was to be Man as well as God, that coming with Divine Power and Authority, and yet with the Affability and Accessibleness of a Man, he might in all respects be  
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fully qualified to perform the Office of a Mediator between God and Man. If he had not been God, he could not have come with absolute Authority to offer us Terms of Reconciliation; and unless he had been Men, he could not have treated with Men in so familiar and condescending a way upon these terms.

And the Right and Authority of Christ's Mediation and Intercession in behalf of Sinners, is founded upon his merits and satisfaction for the Sins of Men; and this supposes him to be both God, and Man; *Man*, that he might Suffer and Die for us; and *God*, that his Divine Nature might give an infinite value to his Death and Sufferings, and render them satisfactory for the Sins of the World. Tho' it should be supposed (which can never be proved) that God in his Mercy might have pardoned Sinners without the satisfaction of Christ; yet if in mercy he might have forgiven, he might in justice have punish'd them, unless satisfaction had been made; and nothing could have made satisfaction to his Justice, but the Sufferings of his Son. The Obedience and Sufferings of no Created Being could have been of that value as to make satisfaction for the Sins of Mankind; and therefore no Creature could have Redeemed Man, or have become Mediator for him upon the terms of his own merits in Man's behalf, so as to plead the price of Redemption laid down for him. God may grant the Requests of Angels and Men,  
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out of his free Mercy and Bounty, but there can be no necessary force and efficacy in Intercessions, where there is no precedent merit and satisfaction on the part of the Intercessor. But Christ pleads his merits on our account, and mediates our Cause with his Father upon the terms of strict Justice, and by vertue of the Ransom of his own Blood; and is so powerful an Intercessor for us, that not only the Mercy and Goodness, but even the Justice of God cannot deny his Intercession. It was the free grace of God to send his Son to Suffer in our stead, but since he was pleas'd to admit of this Commutation of the Punishment which we had deserv'd, and to transferr it upon his own Son; his Death was a *full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World*; which the death of no Creature could have been, and therefore no Created Being could have become our Mediator by vertue of his own Merit, and have satisfy'd the utmost Justice of God; much less could any Creature have merited the assistance of Grace, and the Rewards of Glory for us.

IV. The Incarnation of the Son of God is the most effectual means to excite in us Faith, and Hope, and Charity, and unfeigned Love of God and of our Neighbour, the love of Vertue, and the hatred of Sin; and to dispose and engage us to all Vertue and Piety. The Son of God assuming our Nature, gives us the greatest

greatest assurance of his compassion for our Infirmities, and his desire of our Happiness. God is infinitely merciful in *his own* Divine Nature, but he never could give such an instance of his mercy and love towards *ours*, as by taking it upon himself; God is essential Truth and Holiness; and yet *willing more abundantly to shew to the Heirs of Promise the immutability of his Counsel, he confirm'd it with an Oath*; and in like manner in the present Case, God being willing to give us all the grounds for Faith and Confidence in him that can be imagined, took our Nature upon him, that *by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to deceive; we might have a strong Consolation*, both from the goodness of the Divine Nature, and from the tenderness and compassions of our own. *For we have not an High-Priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities*, and therefore are exhorted in this confidence, *to come boldly unto the Throne of Grace*, Heb. iv. 15, 16. vi. 17, 18. We are assured, that he has the greatest concern for that Nature which he has taken into a personal Union with himself, and continually presents before his Father in Heaven for us. And we are likewise assured of the Father's love towards us; *For now we know that he loves us, seeing he has not withheld his Son, his only Son from us*, but sent him into the World to die for our Salvation. *He that spared not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all; how shall he not with him also*  
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*freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God, that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us, Rom. viii. 32, 33, 34.*

And as the manifestation of Christ in the Flesh is peculiarly adapted and design'd to raise our Faith and Hope, and Trust and Confidence and Dependence upon God, so it is above all the most prevailing motive to engage our Love. The infinite Love of Christ in dying for us, must needs require and even extort from us all possible returns of Love and Praise and Adoration. (y) St. Chrysostome gives this as one Reason, why the Son of God was Incarnate, to become the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind; because if it had been possible for a Creature to undertake and effect our Redemption, Men would never have thought they could have had esteem enough for him, or have made due expressions of their gratitude, unless they had Deified him, and committed Idolatry in Worshipping him, and paying him all Divine Honours: and to prevent this in *Moses*, who was but a Temporal Deliverer, and but a Type of Christ, his Sepulchre was conceal'd from the *Israelites*. So dear is the memory of great and generous Benefactors wont to be, that Men are apt to think they never can be sufficiently grateful to them, unless they even adore and worship them;

(y) Chry-  
sost. l. 1. c. 12.  
Tom. 7.

them, which was one chief occasion of Idolatry among the Heathens; therefore the Redemption of the whole World was a thing that could belong only to the Son of God, to whom all Love and Reverence, all Worship and Adoration is due. And this being the great Aim and Design of the Christian Religion to bring us to obey God upon Principles of Love, the Foundation of it is laid in the Love of God towards us. Nothing can be conceiv'd, which could have so powerfully prevail'd upon Men to love God, as the Incarnation of his Son; and Love being the only principle of Obedience, which can be acceptable to God, this must be the most proper and fitting dispensation, which is most apt to excite in us the Love of God. The Power and Majesty of God had been manifested before in the Creation and Preservation and Government of the World, and in many signal Judgments upon Sinners: the Divine Mercy and Goodness was likewise visible in the daily Blessings bestowed upon Mankind, but *the exceeding Riches of his Grace* was made known *in his kindness towards us thro' Christ Jesus*, Ephes. ii. 7.

And as this must cause us to love God, so it must make us, if any thing can do it, to have love one for another. God Incarnate is the Head and Vital Principle, the common Bond of Life and Union between Christians; and we are oblig'd to mutual Love, not only because we are all of the same Nature, but be-  
cause

cause the Son of God has been pleas'd to dignifie that Nature in assuming it. This ought to make us value our own Nature, and to have a due esteem and affection for it, in whomsoever it be. How can we despise any one who is a Partaker of that Nature, of which the Son of God has vouchsafed to partake in its meanest Condition? or hate any, whom he loved so well as to die for him? This makes all Men worthy of our respect and love, not of our contempt or hatred; they are of that Nature, which Christ, as Man, is of, and they are his Purchase, and we must love what is his, and what he has so dearly paid for, if we love Christ himself. *Beloved, says St. John, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, 1 Joh. iv. 11.* And this is St. Paul's Argument to the *Corinthians* to excite them to Charity towards their poor Brethren. *For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that tho' he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye thro' his poverty might be rich; 2 Cor. viii. 9.*

The Incarnation of the Son of God must likewise cause us to have the greatest hatred and detestation of Sin, as being that which is most displeasing to God, and that which occasioned the death of his only Son to atone for it. And it is evident, that all who neglect so great Salvation, must expect the heaviest Punishment for so heinous a Contempt and Provocation :

vocation: if we will be gained by any methods of Love, Christ has done all that is possible to effect it: But if we will not be moved by all the kindness and compassions of Love it self, we can hope for no further favour; if the Son of God came to die for us, and we will not regard it so as to be made the better by it, nothing more can be look'd for, but *Wrath and fiery Indignation.*

So that the manifestation of the Son of God in the Flesh was the most proper and fitting means to work upon the Love, and Fear, and Hope, and all the Passions of Mankind, and to produce all those Graces in us which the Gospel requires. It is the best fitted both to the Nature and Design of the Gospel, and to the Nature of Man; and therefore if any other Means had been possible, yet none that we can conceive could have been so effectual to procure the Salvation of Men.

## C H A P. XXI.

*Of the Fulness of Time, or the Time appointed by God for the Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour.*

**S**INCE we have so great Evidence to satisfy us that Christ did come into the World, and die for us, it would be the greatest ingratitude and folly as well as Impiety to reject him, tho' we should not be able to give any exact account concerning the Reasons for the time of his coming. *It is not for us to know the Times or the Seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power, Acts i. 7.* These things are in God's disposal, and unless we can be contented to leave the manner and circumstances of our Salvation to his Wisdom, we only shew how little we deserve his Mercies, and how unwilling we are to believe them, and to accept of them. But tho' it be a mere Cavil to dispute the coming of Christ upon a bare Circumstance and Nicety concerning the Reasons for the particular time of his Incarnation; yet it will be easie to give such an account of the time appointed for the Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour, as may serve to silence all Objections against it; and to desire to know any further of it is an useless and unwarrantable Curiosity; for all must acknowledge

ledge that God may have the best and wisest Reasons for his Dispensations, which yet we may not be able to comprehend, and which it doth not concern us to know. The Scripture teacheth us that Christ was born in the *Fulness of Time*, when all things were fulfilled and accomplished in order to it, and the World was in a due readiness and preparation for his coming.

1. God had beforehand us'd all other means to shew the necessity of sending his Son at last, for he was not to be sent but upon necessity; and it was fit they to whom he was sent, should be sensible of that necessity, that they might the better know how to value the infinite mercy of God towards them, in sending his only Son to be born and to die for them. In the beginning of the World, and at the Re-peopling it after the Flood, Revelations were so frequent, and the Will and Commands of God so well known, and his promise to send his Son so clearly understood, that there could be no necessity that Christ should be Born then, since their Faith in him and their Obedience to God's Commandments was as effectual to the Salvation of them that lived so long before his coming, as it is to us, that live so many Ages after it. The Lives of Men in the beginning of the World were so long, and the generations deceased were so few before the Flood, that nothing but wilfull ignorance and negligence could be the cause of so



much wickedness. And after the Flood, the Race of Mankind being reduc'd to so few Persons; the Example and Instructions of *Noah* and *Abraham*, and the other Patriarchs might have been sufficient to keep Men within the measures of their Duty, and to preserve a belief and expectation of the promis'd *Messiah*. For they were saved by their Faith in Christ to come, as we must be saved by Faith in him already come so many Ages past; and therefore to suppose it necessary that he should be Born in those Ages, we must suppose it necessary that he should be Born in every Age of the World, which I think no Man will imagine.

But when the rest of the World was generally fallen away to Idolatry, God chose to himself one Person, from whom by a course of Miracles he raised a mighty Nation, who by their Journeyings and Captivities, and by all the dispensations of his Providence towards them, were appointed to make known his Name and Truth among the *Gentiles*. In the time of *Moses* this People it self was incapable of that pure and Spiritual Worship which the *Messiah* was to appoint, and stood in need of a Ceremonial Law and Service to restrain them from Idolatry, and to preserve the sense and remembrance of the Promises and Laws deliver'd to *Adam*, and *Noah*. And this Ritual Service was unworthy that the *Messiah* should come purposely to appoint it, who was indeed himself the principal thing signified and typified by

by it ; and the Types and Figures of himself could not be Instituted by himself in Person ; for then they would have been insignificant, and there could have been no use or occasion for them. But the most Excellent and Divine Institution was reserv'd for his Appointment, to which all the rest was but preparatory. *The Law was added because of Transgressions, till the Seed should come, to whom the Promise was made,* Gal. iii. 19.

After the Revelation of God's Will and Commandments had thro' the great neglect and wickedness of Mankind become ineffectual, *God sent all his Servants the Prophets daily rising up early and sending them ; an expression setting forth his great care and watchfulness over his People for their good, yet they hearkened not unto him, nor enclin'd their ear, but hardned their neck,* Jer. vii. 25, 26. To Cure this strange stubbornness, and their proneness to Idolatry, God sent this People into Captivity for Seventy years ; which wrought so thorough a Reformation in them, that they were never afterwards given to Idolatry, but endur'd all extremities of Torments rather than they would be brought to any compliance with the Heathen Worship ; and therefore there could be no longer such necessity that the Ceremonial Law should be continu'd to them to keep them from the Worship of Idols : But in other respects their Provocations were still very great. And as the Lord in the Parable first

sent his Servants, and last of all his Son, saying, *they will reverence my Son*; and thereby left those wicked Men without excuse, and manifested the Justice of his Vengeance upon the Murtherers of his own Son. So God first sent his Prophets, and when the *Jews* who had been train'd in the knowledge and worship of him, and were to convey it to other Nations, would not be reclaim'd by them, but revil'd and destroy'd them, and then set up their own Traditions in opposition to their Doctrines; he sends his Beloved Son before he would utterly take away their City and Nation, and effected that by the death of his Son, whom they Crucified, which the experience of so many Ages had shewn could be effected no other way.

God reveal'd himself *at sundry times and in divers manners*, and in his Infinite Wisdom proportioned the ways and measure of his Revelations to the capacities and the necessities of the several Ages, in which they were made, till at last he *hath spoken unto us by his Son*, Heb. i. 1, 2. *When we were Children we were in bondage under the Elements of the World: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law*, Gal. iv. 3, 4.

2. The Reception of Christ and his Gospel in the World would have been much more difficult, if so many Prophets in so many several Ages had not foretold his coming. Our Sa-  
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viour himself and his Apostles after him appeal to *Moses* and the Prophets for the truth of their Doctrine; this was the great Argument which they us'd to the *Jews* in Confirmation even of their Miracles themselves, they prov'd that the Prophets had foretold that Christ should come at that very time when he came, and that he should work those Miracles which he wrought, and should empower his Disciples to do the like: his Death and Resurrection, and Ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost were all Prophefied of; and Prophecies thus foretelling the Miracles, and Miracles fulfilling the Prophecies, and both mutually confirming and supporting each other afforded all the Evidence that could be given; for Prophecies and Miracles are all the ways by which God can be supposed to reveal himself to Mankind. And therefore thousands of the *Jews* were convinc'd out of the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ, and were Converted to the Christian Faith. And the Prophecies concerning the *Messiah* are still an unanswerable Argument in vindication of our Religion; which Argument we must have wanted, if our blessed Saviour had come so much sooner, as not to have been Prophefied of so many Ages beforehand. And those who reject the Gospel now, would have thought they had had much more Reason on their side than they can now pretend to have; for there had then been so much less means for their Conviction. So

that the coming of our Saviour was deferr'd to give the greater Evidence, and the fuller conviction of his being the Christ.

It would have been hard to believe that the Son of God should come into the World with little or no notice given of it beforehand, and few or no Prophets sent to foretell his coming, and prepare his way. But when he had been so long before Prophecy'd of, even from the beginning of the World, thro' the several Ages of it, when there had been a general expectation of the *Messiah* to be born, and the Time and Place, and Tribe and Family and Person of whom he was to be born, by degrees, and at several times had been foretold; when Mens hopes and desires to see him were thus from Age to Age awakened and alarmed, this was a Solemnity worthy to introduce and attend the Son of God into the World, and a Method which would prove a standing Evidence of his being come into it.

3. The time of Christ's coming may depend upon things which we are incapable of knowing. For it may depend upon the duration of the World, and it is impossible for any Man to know how long that shall be. The Scripture speaks of the times of the Gospel under the Phrase of the *last Days*, but this is to be understood in relation not to the continuance of the World; but to the Christian Dispensation, which is the last means of Salvation that God will vouchsafe to Mankind, and with regard  
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to the *Jewish* Church and Government, which was just then at an end, as I shall shew in the next Chapter.

Now if the World may continue as long under the dispensation of the Gospel as it had done before it (and no Man can tell but it may) we shall find little cause to wonder that Christ was not sooner born into the World. For we find that the Faith and Zeal of Christians decays, as we are at a farther distance of time from the Incarnation of our Saviour, and the first propagation of his Gospel, and the length of the time it self proves a temptation to some to disbelieve it; for men are apt to give less credit to what happened long ago, and to think themselves less concern'd in it. If therefore Christ had been born at the beginning of the World, how many more pretences would those Men have feigned to themselves for their Infidelity, who are now so prone to unbelief, and so unwilling to be Christians?

Men are tempted to suspect that there is something of obscurity and uncertainty in all things long since past; and if Christ had been born a thousand or two thousand years sooner, those who now think he came too late, would then have cavilled that he came too soon, and that it was too long ago to be believed, and had happened in a dark and fabulous Age. And therefore it seems that Christ came in the very season and centre of time; that as the  
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former Ages were not so remote as not to be capable of all the benefits of his Death and Passion to be in due time accomplish'd; so the last Ages of the World may have no pretence to question the truth of the Christian Religion upon any account of the long distance of time since the Death of our Saviour and his Apostles. This may be the Case for ought any Man can tell, or many other Reasons there might be much better and more important than this, to deferr the Incarnation of our Saviour; and therefore it is an absurd thing to raise Objections about it. Many Reason there might be for it, which we are incapable of knowing; and it is sufficient for us to know, that it was *in the fulness of time*, and that this time was the most proper and expedient, and therefore was the time appointed and determined by God from all Eternity.

4. God had by the various Methods of his Providence given such signal opportunities to the *Gentiles* to become acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as did mightly prepare them for the acknowledgment of Christ at his coming into the World. All the Dispensations of the Divine Providence from the Beginning, had been as so many several preparations to the Birth of Christ, God chose *Abraham* to be the Father of a peculiar People; and when that People had been by the constant manifestation of a miraculous Providence preserv'd, and by their Laws and Ceremonies

monies distinguished from all other People, they were driven into Captivity, as well in mercy to other Nations, as by God's just Judgment upon them for their Sins, that by this means the *Gentiles* might be instructed in the Worship of the true God, and the Prophecies concerning Christ might become divulged, and all Nations might be in a readiness to acknowledge and receive him who was to be *the desire of all Nations*, and the joy of all People. First, the Ten Tribes were by *Shalmaneser* carried away Captive, and then the two remaining Tribes by *Nebuchadnezzar*; and *Cyrus* was by Name appointed to restore them. *Alexander's* Conquests made yet way for a farther reception of the Prophecies, which were the most considerable about the time of the Captivity. And besides the Prophecy of *Balaam*, by which the Wise Men were directed to find our Christ by the guidance of a Star, those of *Isaiah*, and *Jeremiah*, and *Daniel*, must be well known in the East. The Bible had been about three hundred years before our Saviour's Birth, at the Command of a Heathen Prince Translated into the *Greek* Tongue, which was by the Victories of *Alexander* become the most known Language in the World. And we read of no Revolution of Empires, no Blessing, no Affliction which befell the *Jews*, but it contributed in a remarkable manner to raise an expectation of Christ, and to prepare for his Coming.

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It is certain, that at the time of his Birth, there was among the *Jews* an Universal expectation of the *Messiah*, and that it was a receiv'd Opinion in that Age all over the East, that a great Prince should arise out of *Judea*, this appears both from the Scriptures, and (1) *Sueton.* from (2) *Heathen Writers*; the Wise Men came to enquire after him, and *Herod's* Jealousie proceeded to the utmost Rage and Cruelty, and could not have failed of success, if it had been against any but the true *Messiah*, whom God did by an immediate Revelation deliver out of his hands. All the World stood in expectation of some extraordinary Person, and it was no unwellcome piece of Flattery to one of the *Roman* Emperors not long after, to have it reported, that he was the Prince spoken of and expected in the East, but it was esteemed his Glory and his Happiness to be thought the King that was to arise amongst a despised and hated People. The expectation of Christ was so great, that he could not lie conceal'd in that obscure and mean Condition, but was adored in a Manger, and receiv'd more than Royal Honours from the remotest parts of the Earth. And in this respect it was *the fulness of time*, or the most convenient and proper time for Christ to appear, because the Divine Providence had wonderfully disposed and prepared the World for the expectation of him.

5. The particular temper and disposition of the Age in which our Saviour was born, made it

it the most fitting and proper Age for him to be born in; for there were several things peculiar to that Age, which very much conduce to the proof of the certainty of his Religion. That Age was so remarkable, and the History of it has been delivered down to us by so many eminent Writers, that it is more studied, and generally better known than any Age of the World besides; and it was fit that a thing of this nature and consequence should come to pass in such an Age, that it might be fully enquired into, in any Age afterwards, and that no distance of time might cause such doubts concerning it, as should ever render it the less certain to any, who are willing to acquaint themselves with the truth of it.

It it had been an Imposture, this surely had been the most unlikely time of any for it to succeed. No Prince could be more jealous than *Herod*, who was so enraged at the Report of the Birth of Christ, that he too plainly shew'd how much he credited it. And no Age perhaps since the Creation could be more unlikely to have a Cheat put upon it than this; in which Peace and Learning and all Polite Arts flourish'd, which refine Men's Understandings, and make them the most unfit and difficult to be imposed upon. Policy was in its highest perfection in the Courts of *Augustus* and *Tiberius*, which have been esteemed the greatest Patterns of it ever since; the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were in great Power and Authority

rity at *Jerusalem*, who were a subtle Generation of Men, and the worst Enemies any one could have to deal withall. Vice, which was likely to give the greatest hindrance to a holy Religion, was the fashion of the times, and that Empire was never so abandoned to wickedness, as at the first propagation of the Gospel. As Men were then most able to discover any Imposture, so they must have been most unwilling to find the Christian Religion true, which puts such a check to all Licentiousness, and to their beloved and long accustomed Vices. Vice would be sure to make a strong defence, and an eager Plea, and nothing could be difficult for it to discover, when it had such a number of such subtle and devoted Advocates.

In this Conjunction of time the Saviour of the World appears, and he appears in a mean and low Condition, despised by his own People, who soon became as much despised themselves by all the World besides. The Prince of Peace is Born in a time of settled and Universal Peace, when Men had most leisure and opportunity to examine and consider things; and when by the Establishment of the *Roman Empire* under *Augustus* in its full power and extent, there was an open and free Correspondence between all Nations, and the Apostles and their Followers by this means might find a like admittance to preach the Gospel in all Countries, but to be alike hated and persecuted in all parts of the World. The Religion

Religion of Christ was not to make advantage of any Troubles and Confusions in the Empire, as that of *Mabomet* afterwards did, but to recommend it self by its own worth and efficacy to the most serious and impartial Minds; and under all these disadvantages it soon made its way into the Emperor's Court, where Craft and Luxury, and every thing that is most contrary to the purity and simplicity of the Gospel reigned. St. Paul had his Profelytes in *Caesar's Household*, and his Bonds in Christ were manifest in all the Palace, and in all other places at Rome, Phil. i. 13. iv. 22. The truth of the Gospel approved itself to the most prejudiced Judgments, it stood all the Trials, and Conquer'd all Opposition, that Wit and Learning, and Vice it self could make. For by the leave of the *Atheists* and *Deists* of our own Age, the Christian Religion found the subtlest and most dangerous Adversaries at its first propagation. The *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks* encountred St. Paul at Athens, and these last especially were inferiour to no other *Sect* of Philosophers; either for their obstinacy in adhering to their own Opinions, or for their Art and Skill in Disputation. And it appears from the several Apologies made afterwards in vindication of our Religion, that all was at the very first alledged against it, which can with any presence or colour be objected.

Thus was Christ Born in the fulness of time, when all the Prophecies concerning his coming were



were fulfilled, and when the World was in expectation of him, and had such general notice of his coming; in a time the most unlikely for an Imposture to pass undiscover'd, and therefore the most seasonable for Truth to manifest it self; since that must needs be true, which neither Learning, nor Prejudice, nor Vice, nor Interest could prove to be false. The accomplishment of Prophecies, and the Conversion and Martyrdom of such numbers of Men in such an Age, recommends the Gospel to us with all the advantage which any Juncture of Time could give.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Of the last Days; and of the last Day,  
or the Day of Judgment.*

**B**Y the *last Days* in the Scriptures must be meant either the last Days of the World, or the last Days of the *Jewish* State and Government, or the Days of the Gospel Dispensation; which are the last Days in respect of the Means and Opportunities of Salvation vouchsafed to Mankind.

I. The last Days of the World are seldom mention'd directly, and in express terms, but under such Resemblances as were fit to represent them in the description of other Events.

For

For it was a known thing among the *Jews*, that their whole Dispensation being Typical, whatever happened to them under their Law and Government, must afterwards be fulfilled in a more eminent manner under the Oeconomy and Dispensation of the *Messias*; and therefore the last Days of *Jerusalem* must be Typical of the last Days of the World. For the Destruction of *Jerusalem* at the Conclusion of the *Jewish* Dispensation was only a Type of the final Destruction of the World at the consummation of all things, when Christ shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, 1 Cor. xv. 24. For which Reason our Saviour makes use of such words, *Matt.* xxiv. as are applicable to both of these events, and oftentimes more fitly to the last Judgment, that after the Destruction of *Jerusalem* it might appear, that the rest remains still to be accomplished at the Day of Judgment. But there are likewise such Expressions used, as evidently shew that the Destruction of *Jerusalem* is the thing immediately designed in the Prophecy. This will appear, if we consider several Verses of that Chapter. *Then let them which be in Judea, flee into the Mountains*, ver. 16. and that with the greatest hast; *for let him which is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house*, v. 17. *Neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his Cloaths*, v. 18. But the Condition of such would be very miserable, who should be unfit for flight. And woe

unto them that are with Child, and to them that give suck in those days, v. 19. But pray ye that your flight be not in the Winter, neither on the Sabbath Day, v. 20. There will be no flying from the general destruction of the World, but the Disciples are here warned to fly from the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and escape into the Mountains, and they are commanded to pray that their flight might be hindred neither by the season of the year, nor by the Sabbath, on which the *Jews* were permitted to travel but a very little way. Which supposes that the World was to last after the Tribulation there spoken of; and that therefore the final destruction of this material World is not the thing there immediately meant. And except those days should be shortned, there should no Flesh be saved: but for the Elects sake those days shall be shortned, v. 22. If this Destruction should have raged long in that manner, no Man of the *Jews* could have survived it, but it was to be so abated and so soon over, that the converted *Jews* might be preserved from it; which Promise was very remarkably and wonderfully fullfilled to the Christians at the Siege of *Jerusalem*, who made their escape into the Mountains, and retir'd to *Pella*. For wheresoever the Carcass is, there will the Eagles be gathered together, ver. 28. which is a plain Allusion to the Roman Eagles, or the Standards of their Armies. Immediately after the tribulation.

lation of those days shall the Sun be darkned, and the Moon shall not give her light, and the Stars shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens shall be shaken, ver. 29. This was in some respect literally fulfilled at the Destruction of Jerusalem. But it is usual with the Prophets by these Figures to describe the Destruction of Nations, and the false Teachers are styl'd by St. Jude, ver. 13. wandering Stars, because the true were as the Sun and fix'd Stars. Balaam Prophecy'd that a Star should come out of Jacob, and a Scepter should rise out of Israel, Numb. xxiv. 17. and that Impostor in the time of Adrian, who pretended to be the *Messias* called himself *Barchochebas*, or the Son of a Star. So that by the darkning of the Sun and Moon, and the falling of the Stars from Heaven, by an usual Metaphor, was meant the failing of the Jewish State and Government. This is agreeable to what (a) *Maimonides* relates of the form of Speech usual with the *Arabians*, when they would express any great Calamity, into which any Man was fallen. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass 'till all these things be fulfilled; that is, 'till they be accomplish'd

(a) *Quando enim vaticinatur (Isaias) de Gentis alicujus destructione, vel de Populi alicujus magni interitu ait Stellae cecidisse,*

*cælos interisse, & contremiscere, solem obtenebratum, terram vastatam & commotam esse, aliisq; multis similibus locutionibus Parabolicis utitur; sicut apud Arabes de eo, cui singulare aliquod infortunium accidit, dicitur, quod cælum ipsius in terram conversum sit, vel super terram ejus ceciderit. Maimon. More Nevoch, Part. 2. c. 29. Consuevit enim de regno aliquo loqui ac si esset mundus peculiaris, hoc est, cælum & terra, Ib.*

in their first and immediate sense in the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was destroyed forty years after.

(b) Lightf.  
Harm. of  
the N. T.  
§. ix.

II. These were therefore properly the last days of the City and Government of the *Jews*, who were wont to call the (b) coming of the *Messias the New Creation*, according to the Prophet, *Isa. lxxv. 17. lxxvi. 22.* and the world to come; whereupon in their account, the time immediately foregoing must be the last days of the former World. And thus the Apostle speaks, *they are written for our Admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come, 1 Cor. x. 11.* which may be as truly rendred, upon whom the ends of the Times or Ages are come; for so the word there used signifies. The World had now continued about four thousand years, and this was the end or conclusion of the Ages, when a new period of time was to begin. And the same Apostle shewing, that Christ is not like the Jewish High-Priests, *for then must he often have suffered, since the foundation of the World*, adds, *but now once in the end of the World hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26.* where, tho' in our Translation the word *World* be twice used, yet in the Original it is express'd by two different words, the first signifying the visible and material World, but the latter signifying *Ages*, to teach us that Christ appeared to suffer for us in the end of the Ages, not in the end of this material World. For the Apo-  
stle

He would have used the same word, if he had meant the same thing in both places, and would never have made so sudden a change of words to no purpose.

The last Days, which the Prophet *Joel* foretold, and for which he is quoted by *St. Peter*, *Acts* ii. 16. are the last days of the Jewish State and Government, which was shortly to receive its final period; the Jewish Law and Power was then near its end, and the days or times just before its conclusion and ultimate period was the space granted the Jews for their Conversion, before the destruction of their City and Nation; and these were the last days of their dispensation, and the last opportunity that was to be afforded them, as a distinct and peculiar People.

III. The Scripture speaks of the times of the Gospel as the last days; which is to be understood, not with respect to the duration of time, but to the dispensation of the Gospel; it is the last dispensation which God will vouchsafe to Mankind, the last means and opportunity of Salvation which will be granted to the World, and it is Prophecy'd of under the Character of the last days, *Isa.* ii. 2. *Micah* iv. 1, 2. For the opportunity and time allotted for the means of Salvation, is wont to be stiled the day of Salvation. \**If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes,* *Luke* xix. 42. To day



*if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, Heb. iii. 7, 15. iv. 7. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of Salvation have I succoured thee; behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. Isa. xlix. 8. So that by Day is signified Season or Opportunity in the Language of Scripture, as Night is put to signify the contrary. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day, the Night cometh, when no man can work, Joh. ix. 4.*

The Scriptures herein consider the continuance and duration of the World no otherwise than with relation to the dispensations which God has been pleas'd to afford Men in order to their Salvation, and in this respect the time under the Gospel is the *last days*, tho' it be of never so long duration, because the Gospel is the last dispensation. The last Age of the World is the Age under the Gospel, whether it be longer or shorter than the rest, and the whole duration of this Age is styled the last Days, since by *Days* is not to be understood the length or continuance of any certain time, but the dispensation of the Gospel, and the time under the Gospel is the *last Days*; not because the World then began to draw towards its period or dissolution, but because the Gospel offers us the last opportunity of Salvation, and is the conclusion and period, and the final consummation of the grace and goodness of God extended towards Mankind. The Gospel  
being

being the last means of Salvation offer'd to Mankind, the whole time under it is therefore sometimes stiled the *last Days*, the last distinction of Times, the last Season and Opportunity to be expected.

IV. The Day of Judgment being purposely conceal'd both from Men and Angels to keep us in a continual watchfulness and expectation of it, the Apostle St. *Paul* speaks of it, as that which as to the time of it is uncertain, and therefore is at all times to be expected. And this gave occasion to some to mistake his meaning, tho there is nothing in his words which implies that the Day of Judgment was then approaching. *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord,* 1 Thes. iv. 15, 17. ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες, οἱ περιλειπόμενοι, *we the living, the remaining,* that is the faithful which shall then be alive and remain upon the Earth. St. *Paul* speaks of the Faithful here under a twofold denomination, viz. of the *Dead* and the *Living*, and speaking of the Living he uses the first Person Plural, as being himself yet in the number of the Living; not that he should be of that number at the Day of Judgment.

(c) *Tollit animos* (Tullus Hostilius) *quasi ipse mandasset, spes inde nostris, metus hostibus*, Flor. lib. i. c. 3. ---- *Stipendiariam nobis Provinciam fecit* (Scipio Africanus,) *Hispaniam* lib. ii. c. 17. *Creticum Bellum, si vera volumus noscere, nos fecimus*, lib. iii. c. 7.

Thus frequent (a) Examples are to be found, where Historians Relating matters of Fact which happened long before their own Times, use the expressions of *we* and *our*; we Fought,

our Army Conquer'd; that is, the People of which I am now a Member, or the Army of this People. We (the *English*) Conquer'd *France* in the Reign of King *Henry V.* and if this had been Prophecy'd of, it might have been said, we shall Conquer, &c. Our Saviour speaking to the *Jews*, says *Moses*, *garde you not that bread from Heaven*, when they had told him before, *our Fathers did eat Manna in the Desert*, Joh. vi. 31, 32. And it might as well have been said to the Patriarchs you shall eat manna in the Wilderness, as to the *Jews* of our Saviour's time, you did eat it.

A Prophet foretelling things to come to pass after his own death, might say, We shall do so and so, that is, those of this Nation and People shall do it to which I belong; and therefore reckon my self in the Number, tho' I can have no share in the Action, nor live to see it. In the same manner St. Paul says, *we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*, 1 Cor. xv. 51. that is, we who are not yet in the number of the Dead, but are to be

be reckoned amongst the present and future Living. As when he writes to the *Ephesians*, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by Nature the Children of wrath, even as others, Eph. ii. 3. it is Paraphras'd by Dr. Hammond thus, among who we of the Gentile Church of Rome, from whence I write, formerly lived, &c. It is certain St. Paul expected his own death, 2 Tim. iv. 6. but it is usual with him to speak in his own person by a Figure, and sometimes even when he mentions himself by Name, 1 Cor. iv. 6. and he expressly declares that he did neither by word nor letter signifie that the Day of Christ was at hand, 2 Thes. ii. 2.

V. The Day of Judgment is describ'd with so much Solemnity, and so many Particulars, that it may seem impossible for them all to be dispatched in the compass not only of one but of many Days. But (d) the Jews, from whom our Saviour and his Apostles took the expression of the Day of Judgment, understood by it a Time of many years continuance, and sometimes the term even of a thousand years. And by Day in the Language of the Scriptures is to be understood Season, or any period and distinction of time with respect to some particular thing or occasion; as these are the Generations of the Heavens, and of the Earth, when they were Created, in the day that the Lord God made the Earth and the Heavens, Gen. ii. 4. that

(d) Mede,  
Epist. xx.

that is in the Time, consisting of six days ; the day of temptation in the Wilderness was forty years, Heb. iii. 8, 9. Nay St. Peter uses it to express Eternal Duration, to him be Glory, says he, both now and for ever, which in the Original is, both now, and to the day of Eternity, 2 Pet. iii. 18. Day is us'd for Judgment itself, 1 Cor. iv. 3. and (e) so the Jews understood Days to be meant, Job xxiv. 1. In our Language Days-man signifies Judge or Umpire, Job ix. 33. and *Diem dicere* was the Law-term amongst the Romans for the Summons to a Tryal, but it doth not follow from thence, that the Cause must needs have been decided

(e) Grot.  
ad 1 Cor.  
iv. 3.

(f) *Itaque cum ego diem in Siciliam inquirendi perexiguam postulâssem, invenit iste, qui sibi in Achaiam biduo brevior diem postulat: non ut is idem conficeret diligentia, & industria sua, quod ego meo labore & vigiliis consecutus sum. Et enim ille Achaicus inquisitor, ne Biondium quidem pervenit. Ego Siciliam totam quinquaginta diebus sic obii, ut omnium populorum, privatorumque litteras injuriasque cognoscerem, Cic. in Ver. Act. i.*

upon the same Day, which was appointed for the hearing it. (e) Tully by Day in his first Oration against Verres, means the space of at least Fifty Days. There is no Reason then to suppose that the Last

Judgment must be confined to one or more Days; but it will take up as much time as the Solemnity of the Proceedings require.

— *Hunc diem Judicii ultimum diem dicimus, id est, novissimum Tempus. Nam per quot dies hoc iudicium tendatur, incertum est: sed scripturarum more sanctarum diem poni solere pro tempore, nemo qui literas illas quamlibet negligenter legerit, nescit. Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. xx. c. i.*

CHAP.

C H A P. XXIII.

Of Sacraments.

**T**H<sup>O</sup> the *Jewish* Law was very requisite at that time, and for that People, when it was in force, and the wisest and best Institution that could have been; yet it was indeed a yoke, and such a yoke as was burthensome and not to have been born, but in sure hopes and expectation of better things to come. And at the approach of the Son of Righteousness these shadows vanished, and the Types having attained their end and accomplishment, were laid aside; and in their room Christ has Instituted as few Rites as it was possible; only the two Sacraments; one for our Initiation, and first Reception; and the other for our Re-establishment and Confirmation in that Covenant, which he has been pleas'd to make with us. And yet even these are thought too many by some, who as if they were all Soul and Spirit without Body, are only for a Mental and Spiritual Worship. To vindicate therefore the Institution and use of Sacraments, I shall *First*, Consider the Nature and Design of Sacraments in General; *Secondly*, I shall shew how fully the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper answer the End and Design of the Institution of Sacraments.

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I. I will enquire into the Nature and Design of Sacraments in General. Sacraments may be consider'd, either, 1. as outward and visible Signs of our entrance into Covenant with God, or of our renewing our Covenant with him. Or, 2. As Pledges of God's Grace and Favour towards us. Or, 3. As the Means and Instruments, whereby he is pleas'd to convey into our Souls the blessed Influences of his Holy Spirit. Or, lastly, they may be consider'd as visible Rites, whereby we are admitted into the visible Society of Christ's Church, or profess our Communion with it, And in all these respects it will appear, how beneficial and requisite the Institution of Sacraments is, and how fitting it is that God in his Dispensations with Men should appoint something outward and visible to be done, or received by them.

I. Ceremonies and Rites of Initiation and of Worship have been Instituted in all Religions, which is Evidence sufficient, that the Nature of Man requires them, and that our Worship cannot be wholly Mental and Spiritual. And God is pleas'd in his Dealings with Mankind, to condescend to their Capacities, to ascribe to himself their Passions, to allude to their Customs, and to make use of such Means and Methods as Men are accustomed to in their Dealings with one another. He best understands Humane Nature, and knows all the dispositions and tendencies of it; *he knoweth*

*knoweth our frame, he remembreth that we are dust,* Pf. ciii. 14. He considers that we are Flesh as well as Spirit, he fully comprehends the strict Union between the Soul and the Body, and the cause and manner of it, and how great influence the one hath upon the other in their several Operations; he planted in us all our Powers and Faculties, and sees all their Motions and Inclinations, the secret Springs of Action and Passion, and has accordingly fitted and proportioned the Institution of his Laws and Ordinances.

We see among Men, that they are not content only to understand one anothers Meaning, or to express their Minds in words, tho' they be the most solemn and significant; but are wont to use some Ceremony and Solemnity of Action and Circumstances in matters of great Importance; because this makes greater impression upon the Mind, and lays upon it a more forcible and lasting engagement by taking in the Senses and Passions, as Parties concerned with it; and this is by experience found to have the best effect to all the ends and purposes of Agreement and Obligation between Men. Oaths themselves are not found to be so secure to be rely'd upon, when they are only pronounc'd, as when they are taken with such Circumstances of words and gesture, as may create an awe and reverence in those who take them. For the manner and circumstances in which any action is done, raise and fix

fix the Attention, and exprefs the Mind and Design of the Doer, and are better retain'd in the Memory, and work more upon the Will and Affections, than the Action of itfelf can do. This Orators very well underftand; for the Art of Rhetorick is almoft nothing elfe but a fkilfull management of the circumftances of actions to the advantage of a Cause. And Philofophy informs us, that the evil or goodnefs of Actions depends chiefly upon their Circumftances; from whence we learn what the intention of the Mind is, and to what degree of Refolution it came in the performance of any Action. If an Action be performed at a folemn time and place, in the prefence of Witneffes met together for that very purpofe, upon great deliberation; with fuch words and geftures as are very fignificant to exprefs our full Design and Intention; all thefe Circumftances confider'd make it much more our own proper Act and Deed than if it were done without them, tho' the Intention were the fame. For what we declare before others to be our mind and purpofe to do or undertake, we cannot but think our felves bound to under more obligations than if we barely design'd it, or promis'd it only to the Perfons concern'd; becaufe the design of declaring it is to lay upon our felves a farther obligation to perform it, and to call others as Witneffes againft us, if we neglect the performance of it; and fince our Refolution may be declar'd as well  
by

by Actions as by Words: he that expresses his Resolution both these ways, shews a farther design to oblige himself, than if he should only use words to express it; and if the Circumstances of Actions be stated, and solemn and significant, then all the ways and means concur, by which it is possible for Men to declare and express their Minds in any Case, and to oblige themselves to the performance of any Covenant.

Now Sacraments are the Seals of the Covenant between God and Man, and when God is pleas'd to receive Men into Covenant with himself, it is requisite that Men should not barely give their assent to the Terms and Conditions of it, and declare that they will undertake them; but it is farther necessary that this should be done with all the Solemnity of Words and Actions that may engage them to the performance of it, and render them inexcusable if they transgress it; it is fitting it should be entred into, and renewed in the presence of Witnesses, that the Words should be Solemn, and the Actions Significant, and that nothing should be wanting, which may testify the Sincerity, and secure the Fidelity of the Undertakers. For if Covenants between Man and Man be made with all the formality of Witnesses, and Hands and Seals, and Delivery in solemn and express words; if Men know themselves too well to trust one another without all this Solemnity, it may well be expected

expected, that when God is pleas'd to permit them to enter into Covenant with himself, he should not receive them under less Obligations of Caution and Security for their Integrity, than Men are wont to use amongst themselves. For every breach of Covenant with him, is infinitely more affronting and sinful than any breach of Covenant with Man can be; and therefore God, who will not be mocked, has appointed the most effectual Means to secure his Laws from contempt; he knows the deceitfulness of Man's heart, how perverse and stubborn it is, especially in things of such a Nature as these are of, to which Men are obliged by that Promise and Vow that they are required to make to him; and that all the Restraints and all the Remembrances which Words or Actions can afford, are little enough to keep Men in any tolerable measure to their Duty.

God was pleas'd to confirm his Promise to *Abraham* with an Oath; and therein shew'd himself willing to give all the assurance that the most Incredulous Man can desire, of the fix'd and unalterable steadfastness of his purpose, and the *Immutability of his Council*, that we might have a strong Consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And when God himself is pleas'd so far to condescend for our comfort and satisfaction, it is most reasonable that he should oblige us to perform our part of the Covenant, by all the ways that may put us in remembrance of our Duty,

Duty, and make us faithful and constant in the performance of it. And this could be effected by no better Means, than by outward Acts and visible Signs to testify and profess in the most serious and solemn manner, what our inward Faith and Resolutions are. This is that sort of security which Men have of one another, and when God makes a Covenant with Men, he considers them as Men; that is, he appoints such Solemnities of it as have respect to the Body as well as to the Soul; he doth not deal with us as with immaterial Spirits, but as with Creatures consisting of Soul and Body, and who little regard, and are little affected with that, which doth not some way concern the one as well as the other.

And it is strange to see to what Extravagancies those have proceeded, who have set up for a purely Spiritual Worship without any thing Sacramental for a visible Sign in it. For not to mention the Pretensions of our Enthusiasts, who by decrying the use and necessity of Sacraments, have made Religion nothing but an empty and uncertain Name amongst them. *Prophyrus*, who was a Man of Study and Learning, after he had Apostatiz'd from the Christian Religion, upon a ridiculous Occasion, as History relates it, was ashamed to return to the Heathen Idolatry, which after the appearance of Christianity in the World, soon became too notoriously absurd and abominable for any Man pretending so much to

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Reason and good Sense to own it; but he placed all Divine Worship in Mental Prayer, and so far rejected all outward and Bodily Worship, (g) *Porphy.* (g) that he pretended the Prayers of Men were polluted and defiled by any thing of that Nature, and rendred unacceptable to the Deity, and that they never were sufficiently pure and perfect, if they were express'd by the Voice, but were then in their highest degree of Perfection, when they were all Contemplation, and Rapture, and Extasie. And the very same Notions were taught by (b) *Apolonius Tyanæus*, and have been revived of late by such as undervalue all outward Ordinances, which may be a Warning to others, and an Evidence of the Divine Wisdom in appointing Sacraments as outward and visible Signs of our Covenant and Communion with God.

(g) *Porphy.*  
de Ab-  
stinent.  
lib. 2. §. 34.

(h) *Euseb.*  
Præpar.  
Evang.  
lib. iv. c.  
13.

2. As these outward Signs serve to raise our Attention and fix our Minds, and to put us in Remembrance, that Heaven and Earth, Angels and Men are Witnesses against us, if we prove treacherous and unfaithful in this Covenant; so they are as Tokens and Pledges to us of God's Love and Favour, and of his merciful and gracious Intentions towards us, in taking us into Covenant with himself; they give us sensible and visible Assurances of that Grace, which is invisible and Spiritual. And this seems but necessary for Creatures that are led so much by Sense, as we all are in this Life, that God together with his Word and Promises

Promises should besides appoint something, which may be perceiv'd by our Bodily Senses in Token of those Blessings which are bestow'd upon the Soul, that what is no Object of Sense, may yet be represented and signified by something that is sensible; to bring, as far as it is possible, the most Divine and Heavenly things down to our very Senses; which may be a Sign and Token of present Grace and Favour, and a Pledge and Earnest of future Glory and Happiness. And this is what is found very useful and necessary amongst Men, who are better contented with something present and in hand, tho' of little value, and insignificant in itself, as a Token and Pledge of what is promised and made over to them, than they are with the greatest Promises and Protections without any thing as an Earnest to confirm them; because this is a Natural Evidence, that they are indeed in *Earnest* (as our *English* word expresses it) and really intend what they say, and it may be produced against them, if they should fail of Performance. Now what is inward and invisible is absent as to Sense, and what is future has need of something present to represent it to us: And God who was pleased to bind himself even by an Oath for our farther Comfort and Trust in him; has been pleased likewise, that he might be wanting in nothing, which might help our Infirmities and assist our Faith; he has been pleased in condescension to the Condition and

Frailty of Humane Nature, to appoint visible Signs and Pledges of that which is Invisible, and to give all the Assurance to our very Senses that they are capable of, that all the Promises of his Spiritual Blessings and Graces shall as certainly be fulfilled to us, as the outward Signs and Pledges are appointed for us, and duly received by us.

3. Sacraments are not only Signs and Tokens of Spiritual Gifts and Graces, but they are ordained as Means and Instruments of Grace and Salvation to us, that as the Body partakes in the Moral Actions of Vertue and Vice, so it might concur in the Religious Acts ordained for our Sanctification. For God, who has made us so as to consist of Soul and Body, and to have the Vital Union between Soul and Body depend upon a fit Disposition of the Body, and to be maintained by the Health and Nourishment of it, has been pleas'd to appoint certain Bodily Actions as the Means and Instruments of our Spiritual Life, that the Soul might not even in this Case, where itself is more immediately concern'd, be wholly independent of the Body; but that since both must be either happy or miserable together in the next Life, both might concur in the way and means of Salvation in this; yet so, as that the Soul should be the first and principal Agent, and the Body should act only in subordination and subserviency to it in this, as it doth in other Cases; that as in Moral Actions  
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the Soul acts vertuously or viciously by the Body ; so in Spiritual Actions the Soul might receive Advantage and Benefit by Bodily Acts, and be deprived of it upon the Omission or Neglect of such Acts.

The Body without the Soul is not the Man, nor the Soul without the Body, but both Soul and Body together, and the whole Man becomes dedicated and consecrated to God's Worship and Service in the use of Actions performed outwardly in the Body. And it is requisite that the Body as well as the Soul should be thus dedicated to God in Token of the Resurrection of the Body, and of that Happiness which it must receive in Heaven, if the Soul be happy. St. Paul exhorts the *Corinthians* to glorifie God in their Body as well as in their Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 20. he tells them, that the Body is not for Fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the Body: know ye not, says he, that your Bodies are the members of Christ? what? know ye not, that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost? There have been those in several Ages, who have made such high Pretences to Spiritual Worship, that they would allow the Body no part or share in it; and others from the great irregularity and corruption which they could not but observe in their Carnal Appetites, have concluded that the Body was made not by God, but by a wicked Being, and that the Soul only was from God. Since therefore God is pleased to

regard our Bodies as Members of Christ, and Temples of the Holy Ghost, it was requisite, that in contradiction to these, and such like Errors, they should by some Rite or Sign be devoted to him, by which it might be declared, that *Christ is the Saviour of the Body*, Ephes. v. 23. and by which such Grace might be communicated, as to render it the Temple and place of Residence of the Holy Ghost, set apart and dedicated to him, and inhabited by him, that *the whole Spirit and Soul and Body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Thes. v. 23. It is the great and gracious Design of God to sanctifie the whole Man, and therefore Christ took not only an Humane Soul, but Humane Flesh likewise, to dignifie it in the Assumption, and offer it upon the Cross, and translate it into Glory. And as his Incarnation shews the particular Regard he has for the Body as well as for the Soul of Man, so the whole Institution of the Gospel hath relation to both.

4. Lastly, The Sacraments are Fœderal Rites of our Admission into the Church, as into a visible Society, and of our Union with it as such. For we cannot be admitted into a visible Society, nor communicate with it, but by visible and outward Acts, which must be performed in the Body.

So that whatever way we consider the Sacraments, either in respect of God, or of our selves, or of others, there is a necessary use and

and benefit from them, and evident Reason for their Institution. They are requisite as Symbols of our entrance into Covenant with God, or of the Renewing and Confirmation of it, and of Dedicating both our Bodies and Souls to his Honour and Service; they are Instruments of his Graces, and Pledges of his Promises made to us by Covenant, and of the Reward and Happiness both of our Bodies and Souls at the Resurrection; and are visible Marks and Evidences of our Profession, as Members of the Church, of our Admission into it, and our Communion with it.

II. The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper fully answer the End and Design of the Institution of Sacraments. After the coming of Christ, and the fulfilling of the Ceremonial Law by him, it was of no longer use or continuance, the Gospel being to introduce a Spiritual Service, by teaching Men to *worship God in Spirit and in Truth*: Yet there was need of some external Ordinances or Sacraments, the Nature of Man, and the State of this World requiring them; but that they might be as few as possible, Christ has appointed but two Sacraments *as generally necessary to Salvation*, and these the fittest and most expedient for the benefit and wants of Men.

I. As to Baptism, the Reasons and Designs in the Institution of Sacraments are all visible in it. It is a very significant and apt Repre-



sentation of the cleansing and purifying the Soul from Sin, and in this Men of all Nations and of all Religions seem to have been agreed. For nothing was more frequent among the *Heathens* than their Washings and Purifications; and tho' they attributed a great deal too much to them, yet the superstitious Opinion which they had of these outward Cleansings, could never have so universally prevail'd, if there had not been some Foundation for the use of them in the Nature of Things, and that is the great fitness which is in these outward Washings to excite us to purity of Mind, and to represent the great Duty which lies upon us, to keep our Consciences undefiled, which only can render us accepted with God.

And as these Washings and Purifications were common in other Religions, so the *Jewish* Church was wont to receive Proselytes or Converts by Baptism; for which Custom they alledge the command of God to *Moses*, *Exod. xix. 10.* but (i) Dr. *Lightfoot* sets it higher, and thinks it was begun by *Jacob*, *Gen. xxxv. 2.* And our Saviour, who both in his Words and Actions throughout the whole Gospel condescended to a compliance with the Customs in use among the *Jews* so far as they might be serviceable to the ends of the Gospel, was pleased to make choice of Baptism for the Admission of Persons to the Profession of his Religion, as the *Jews* used it for the Admission of their Proselytes.

(i) Hebr.  
& Talmud  
Exercit. on  
Matt. iii. 6.

Baptism

Baptism is very agreeable to the Nature of the Christian Religion, being a plain and easie Rite, and having a Natural significancy of that Purity of Heart which it is the design of the Gospel to promote and establish in the World; and it is fitted to represent to us the cleansing of our Souls by the Blood of Christ, and the Grace of Purity and Holiness, which is conveyed in this Sacrament, and the Spirit of Regeneration which is conferred by it, *John* iii. 5. *Tit.* iii. 5. And it being in use both amongst *Jews* and *Gentiles*, it was so much the more proper, because both had already an Opinion of the expediency of it. Christ came to abolish the Ceremonies of the *Jewish* Law, and the vain and idolatrous superstitions of the *Heathen* Worship, and yet some outward Rite of Worship was necessary to be made use of, to dedicate the Body as well as the Soul to God's Honour and Service, to be a Pledge of the Resurrection of the Body, as well as of the Immortality of the Soul, to put Men in mind of that Integrity and Purity of Life which the Gospel requires, and to be a means of conveying it, and to admit them as visible Members into the Church. And as Baptism was very expedient to be Instituted upon all these Accounts; so it had this peculiar advantage beyond any other Rite, that it was already in great use and esteem, and could seem strange neither to *Jews* nor *Gentiles*; but it had been a very strange thing to both, and very unsuitable

suitable to the Nature of Man, if the most Spiritual and Heavenly Religion, that can be, on this side Heaven, had been instituted without any external Rite for the Admission into it; this had been to suppose the Church to consist of Angels and not of Men, who have need of Assistance from outward Objects in their highest Acts of Religion, it had been to make Men to suspect that the Body (as some Hereticks imagined) was little regarded of God, if no notice had been taken of it, at our Reception into Covenant with him; and it besides had been to contradict the Notion which Mankind have ever had of Religion, and to give the highest scandal both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

2. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is so often the subject of Sermons, and of every good Christians Meditation, that very little needs to be here said of it. For it is evident that the Elements of Bread and Wine have a peculiar suitability to bring to our remembrance the Body and Blood of Christ offer'd upon the Cross for us, to make us Partakers of them, and to be Pledges of all the Benefits which we receive thereby. And as the Eucharist was appointed by Christ in the room of the Paschal Supper, so Bread and Wine were in use among all Nations in their Religious Worship, and nothing can more fitly express our Communion with God and with one another, than to be entertained together at God's Table.

So that since there must be Sacraments or External Rites and Ordinances, they could neither be fewer, nor more suitable to the simplicity of the Gospel, and to the Wants of Christians, than the Sacraments of Baptism, and of the Lord's Supper are.

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C H A P. XXIV.

*Of the Blessed TRINITY.*

**I** Am not here to prove the Doctrine of the Trinity from the Scriptures, but to suppose this to be the Doctrine which the Scriptures teach, and to shew that no reasonable Objection can be brought against the Christian Religion upon that Account. And indeed this was supposed to be the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and objected against by *(k)* *Heathens* long before the Council of *Nice*. Which is a strong proof for the Truth and Antiquity of this Doctrine, when it was so well known even to the *Heathens*, that they upbraided the Christians with it in the second Century, and in all probability from the very beginning; for we find it then mentioned as a known and common Reproach. Supposing then this to be the Doctrine of the Scriptures, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are but one God, I will shew,

*(k)* Lucian  
Philopatr.

I. That

*The Reasonableness and Certainty*

I. That there is no Contradiction in this Mystery of our Religion.

II. That other things are and must be believed by us, which we as little understand.

III. That the Belief of this Doctrine doth mightily tend to the advancement of Vertue and Holiness, and hath a great influence upon the Lives and Conversations of Men.

I. There is no Contradiction in this Doctrine, We are ignorant of the Essences of Created Beings, which are known to us only by their Causes, and Effects, and by their Operations and Qualities; and our Reason and Senses and Passions being continually conversant about these, our Notions are formed upon the Ideas which we frame to our selves concerning the Creatures, and this makes us the less capable of understanding the Divine Essence, besides the infinite Disproportion between the Nature of God, and Humane Faculties. When we say, that God is an Infinite and Incomprehensible Being, we speak the general sense of Mankind, and no Man cavils at it; but because the Scriptures represent this Incomprehensible Being to us under the Notion of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is Matter of Cavil and Dispute. Whereas God being essentially Holy and True, we must believe him to be what he declares himself to be in the Scriptures, and he being Incomprehensible, we may not be able to comprehend it. If God be infallibly True, why do we  
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not believe what he delivers concerning himself? And if he be Incomprehensible, what Reason can be given why the Divine Essence may not subsist in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? These are styled Three Persons, because we find distinct Personal Acts and Properties attributed to them in the Scriptures, and we may suppose Three Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature without any appearance of contradiction. This will be evident, if we consider,

1. The Distinction of the Three Persons in the Deity.

2. The Unity of the Divine Nature.

3. The Difference between the Divine Persons, and Humane Persons.

1. The Distinction of the Three Persons in the Deity. The Divine Nature is in Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; in the Father Originally without either Generation or Procession; in the Son, as communicated to him by the Father, not in any such way as Sons amongst Men have their Nature derived to them from their Fathers, but yet in some such manner as is best expressed to our Apprehensions by styling him the Son of God, tho' the manner of his Generation is altogether incomprehensible to us. The Holy Ghost has the Divine Nature communicated to him from the Father and the Son, not in the same way whereby the Son has it communicated to him from the Father, but in some other



other different incomprehensible manner, whereby he is not begotten, but proceeds both from the Father and the Son. The Divine Nature is communicated by the Father to the Son by Eternal Generation, and by the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost by Eternal Proceſſion: We have nothing further revealed to us of the Generation of the Son, but that he is begotten, or received the Divine Nature from the Father in ſome ſuch way, as, for want of a fitter Word, we can beſt underſtand by the Term of Generation; and the Scripture teacheth us no more of the Proceſſion of the Holy Ghost, but that he is not begotten of the Father, as the Son is, but proceeds from the Father and the Son ſome other way, and not by Generation. But as he that would Diſcourſe to a Man born Blind concerning Light, muſt uſe many very improper expreſſions to make himſelf, tho' never ſo imperfectly, underſtood; ſo it is here; we have no words that are proper, but theſe are ſufficient to teach us all which we are capable of knowing, at leaſt all that is neceſſary for us to know of the Godhead.

2. The Unity of the Divine Nature. To ſay that Three Gods are one God, or that Three Perſons are One Perſon is a manifeſt Contradiſtion; but to ſay that Three Perſons are (not One Perſon, but) One God, is ſo far from a Contradiſtion, that it is a Wonder how it ſhould be miſtaken for One by any  
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who understand what a Contradiction means. *The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not Three Gods, but One God.* For neither of these Three Persons is God distinct and separate from the rest, but they all are but One God; *One Lord (Jehovah) not Three distinct and separate Lords, and so not Three Eternals, nor Three Incomprehensibles, nor Three Uncreated, nor Three Almightyes,* distinct and separate from each other; but all the Three Persons together are One Eternal, Incomprehensible, Uncreated, Almighty Lord, God.

It is Matter of Dispute, what is the Principle of *Individuation* in Men, or what it is which causes one Man to be a different Individual Person from another; and it is still more difficult to find out the Principle of Individuation in Beings which are purely Spiritual, and have nothing of Material Accidents to distinguish them. But whatever the Principle of Individuation in Men may be, it is certain that the Consequence of it is, that two Men may exist separately both as to Time and Place, and that one may know more or less than the other, they may live at a distance the one from the other, and can never at once fill the same Numerical Place, nor is their Knowledge the same: there is nothing in their common Nature to determine them, that they should be born or die together, or that there should be any mutual communication of the Thoughts,

Thoughts, and Operations of their Minds, much less that their Life and Death and Operations should be all the very same. So that this Principle of Individuation, whatever be assigned to be it, cannot belong to the Divine Nature, which is Omnipresent, Eternal, and Omniscient; the Existence, Knowledge, and Local presence of Men are *Personal* not *Essential*, but Omnipresence, Eternity, and Omniscience are *Essential* Attributes of God, and not *Personal*, or do not belong to each Person, as they are distinguished from one another, but as they are united in the same Essence; for they are predicated of the Father, as God; of the Son, as God; and of the Holy Ghost, as God; and not of each severally, as Father, as Son, and as Holy Ghost. Every of these *Essential* Attributes therefore cannot be numbred with the *Persons* in the Deity, but can be but One, as the *Essence* itself of the Deity is, 'and tho' *the Father be Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal, yet they are not Three Eternals*, or Three Individual Beings of Eternal Existence, as Three Humane Persons are Three Men of a Finite Existence. It is a Contradiction that there should be Three separate Infinite Persons; for their being separate must suppose them to be Finite, or to have a limited and confined Subsistence; and therefore Three Infinite Persons can be but One God, or One Being, which has all the perfections of Personal

nal Distinction, without the imperfection of the Division of Persons.

3. From hence appears the Difference between the Divine Persons and Humane Persons. The Persons of Men are distinct Men as well as distinct Persons, but this is no ground for us to affirm, that the Persons in the Divine Nature are distinct Gods, because the Divine Nature is acknowledged to be Infinite and Incomprehensible, and when we speak of Three Persons in it, we do not mean such Three Persons as Three several Men are. But we read of the *Person* of the Father, *Hebr. i. 3.* and of *Three, that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One, 1 Joh. v. 7.* and when we speak of Three Intelligent Beings, we can have no Conception of them, but under the Notion of Persons. We learn from the Scriptures, that there are Three Persons in the Deity, which bear that Relation to each other, which is best express'd by the Terms of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; but the Terms of Father, Son, and Spirit are not therefore so to be understood, as they are in Humane Relations, and the word Person is not to be understood, as it is of Humane Persons; and therefore whereas we use the word *Person*, the *Greeks* call them *Substencies*, but acknowledge that they mean the same thing under that difference of words.

And yet this is all the foundation of any pretence of contradiction in the Notion of the Blessed Trinity, that Men will needs understand the Terms of Person, and of Father, Son, and Spirit, when they are applied to God, as they do, when we speak of Men, and from thence they conclude, that Three Persons in the Divine Nature must be Three Gods, as Three Persons amongst Men are Three Men; and that the Father must be Superiour and Elder than the Son, as it is in Humane Generations. But this is all Mistake; *Adam* is stiled *the Son of God* in a sense of the word peculiar to himself, *Luke* iii. 38. God is in one sense the Father of all Mankind, and in another sense he is the Father of the Regenerate only; and when in either sense we call him *our Father*, we take not the Word *Father* in the same sense that we take it in, when we apply it to Men; and when we say he is the Father of his only begotten Son, this is another sense of the word *Father*, very different from all the former. The Relation between the Father and Son is not the same in the Nature of God, that it is amongst Men, nor are the Divine Persons such as the Persons of Men are; but these are the fittest, and the most proper and significant Terms, to express the Nature of God to us, that Humane Language and Humane Understandings are capable of. We must acknowledge that there is a vast disproportion  
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and impropriety in these expressions, and that they give us but a very imperfect conception of the Divine Nature, but it is the most perfect that we are able to have of it, or that it is necessary for us to have of it in this Mortal state; and if we will but allow for the incompetency of our own Faculties to have Words and Notions adequate to the Divine Nature, and will remember that God is God, and that we are but Men, there will appear to be no contradiction in the Notion of the Trinity.

The Divine Nature is such, that it has Three distinct Principles of Operation and Subsistency, which are so described and represented in the Scriptures by Personal Acts and Properties, that we know them to be as really distinct as Humane Persons are, which yet being but One God, cannot in this respect be like Humane Persons. And whoever will oppose this Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, must prove that the Three Persons of the Trinity cannot be as really distinct, as the Persons of Three Men are, tho' they are not such Persons, as the Persons of Men. And to prove this, he must understand the Nature of God, as well as he understands the Nature of Man; for otherwise he can never be able to prove that Three Divine Persons may not be One God, tho' Three Humane Persons cannot be One Man. That they are distinct Persons is revealed, and that these



Three distinct Persons are, but one God is revealed, but wherein the Distinction and the Unity of these Three Persons consists is not revealed, nor is it possible for us to understand it, at least without a Revelation. The Distinction of the Persons of Men is founded in a separate and divided Subsistence, but this cannot be the foundation of the Distinction of the Divine Persons, because Separation and Division cannot belong to an Infinite Nature. There is then no Repugnancy in saying that there are Three Subsistencies, or Three distinct Principles of Personal Acts and Properties in one undivided Infinite Nature, or that the Persons in the Trinity act as distinctly and personally, as Persons do amongst Men, but are united in one Infinite Nature, which is incapable of existing in separate Subsistencies, tho' not of acting and subsisting in Three distinct Persons, or as distinctly from each other, as the Persons among Men do act and subsist.

The Summ is, that in the most perfect Unity of the Divine Nature, do subsist the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, between whom is a real Distinction, which tho' not the same, yet is equivalent to the Distinction of Persons among Men. That there is this Unity and this Distinction, we learn from the Scriptures, but what kind of Distinction this is, or how far it is to be reconciled with our Notion of Persons amongst Men,

Men, and after what manner it is consistent with the Unity of the Godhead, the Scriptures have not told us, and it is impossible for us to determine.

II. Other things are, and must be believed by us, which are as little understood as this Doctrine. Our Knowledge at the best, concerning Finite Things is very imperfect, which is so generally acknowledged by all Men of Wisdom and Experience, that it is esteemed a great point of Wisdom for a Man to be truly sensible of his own ignorance; and it is the Character, which *Solomon* himself giveth of the Fool, that he *rageth and is confident*, Prov. xiv. 16. But when we consider things Infinite, we are much more at a loss. That there must of necessity be something Eternal, must be acknowledged by all, who understand what is meant by the word; even those that are so *foolish*, as to say in their hearts there is no God, yet must believe something else to be Eternal; they must believe that there always was something, because if ever there had been nothing, there never could have been any thing. For how could any thing have been produced by Nothing? Out of Nothing it might, but then there must have been something to produce it. We can be certain therefore of Nothing, if we are not sure of this, that there is something Eternal; the Atheist himself cannot deny it, unless he be so stupid as not to know

what it means. And yet what apparent contradictions may he fancy to himself in the Notion of Eternity? For what is Eternal can never be capable of either a shorter or a longer Duration than it always had; so that Millions of Ages hence it will not have continued longer, than it had done as many Million of Ages past. And how strange and contradictory doth this seem to be, that not only Three Ages and one Age should be the same, but that there should be no difference between one Hour or Moment, and never so many Ages in respect of Eternity. And there is no avoiding this difficulty, if a Man be of any Religion, or no Religion, let him but apprehend what is meant by Eternity, and he must own both that there is such a thing, and that he is utterly unable to explain it. Here then is an unanswerable Difficulty in a thing which all the World must believe, if they have it but so proposed to them, as to be made understand what it is. And there is no difficulty imaginable in the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, which can be pretended to be greater, than that which is inseparable from this Notion, which all must of necessity hold.

And if we do but observe it in Finite things, which are usual and familiar to us, and the Objects of our Senses every day, we Believe what we very little understand, or are capable of understanding. Our Know-  
ledge

ledge indeed is so very imperfect concerning the Nature of most things, that I may almost venture to say, that if we will but be contented for the present to believe what God has delivered concerning his own Nature, we may hereafter know God himself as plainly as now we know many things here. *For now we see through a Glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.*

If it be thought unreasonable however, that such abstruse Mysteries should be made necessary to Salvation, and that we should pronounce that *whosoever will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity*, and that all who do not thus think and believe, shall *without doubt perish everlastingly*.

Let it be considered, that in all Religions, whether Natural or Revealed, there must be something believed, which is above all Humane Comprehension, and which can be known no further than in order to be believed; there can be no Faith without all Knowledge, but Knowledge, if it were compleat, would exclude Faith, which is *the Evidence of things not seen*. Knowledge may be considered either as it is *general* and imperfect; or as it is *particular* and adequate to the Nature of the thing known; we must have a general Knowledge of whatever is the Object of Faith, but if we had a particular and adequate knowledge of it, there could remain nothing of it

unknown, to be the Object of Faith. The difference between Science and Faith is, not that we are less certain of the Objects of Faith, than of the Objects of Science, but that we know less of them. For Certainty depends upon our *general* Knowledge, as that God is true; and therefore what he has revealed, is as certain, as if we saw it, or could demonstrate it in every particular. And this *general* Knowledge, which is necessary in order to Faith is, in Natural Religion, attained to by Reason, and in Revealed Religion, from Revelation. Thus we attain to such a *general* Knowledge of the Divine Nature by Rational Evidence, as to be convinced, that Infinite Power, and Goodness, and Truth, and all manner of Infinite Perfections belong to it; but we believe the Divine Perfections without any particular comprehensive Knowledge of them; in like manner, from Revelation we attain to this *general* Knowledge, that the Divine Nature consists of Three Persons in One undivided Essence, but we believe these Three Persons to be One God, without any particular and comprehensive Knowledge of so great a Mystery; for then it would no longer be a Mystery, and Faith would be no more Faith.

I would therefore ask the Adversaries of this Doctrine, whether the Belief of a God, Omnipresent, Eternal, Almighty, Omniscient, Infinitely Holy, Just, and Merciful, be  
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not necessary to Salvation? No rational Man can deny it. I enquire further, whether Infants and Ideots are obliged necessarily under pain of Damnation to this Belief? They must certainly answer, no; because none can be obliged to Impossibilities. I demand then again, whether, if one or more of these Attributes, or the Agreement of them one with another be impossible to be understood (with a *general* and imperfect Knowledge) by any who are capable of knowing and believing the rest; the ignorance of these Articles, which are above their Understandings (even as to this *general* and imperfect way of Knowledge) can be destructive of their Salvation? They must needs say it cannot, because God can require nothing impossible of any Man. And the very same Answers applied to the Cavils against the *Athanasian* Creed will be sufficient to Silence them. That Creed contains such Truths as are necessary to be believed in order to Salvation; but necessary to particular Persons so far only, as they are capable of knowing them, in order to believing them. *He that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity;* but this supposes him capable of thinking thus; for it is ever supposed and agreed in all Cases, that no Man is bound to any thing impossible; and that God requires nothing of any Man either in Faith or Practice beyond his Power and Capacity. *Whosoever will be Saved, before all things*



*things it is necessary, that he hold the Catho-  
lick Faith; which Faith except every one do  
keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall  
perish everlastingly.* But this supposes that he  
has already attained, or is able to attain to  
the Knowledge which is necessary to Faith,  
for no Man can hold that Faith, the *general*  
Knowledge whereof he cannot attain. We  
must with an implicit Faith believe all that  
God says to be true, tho' it be never so much  
above our Understanding; but no Man is  
bound to believe explicitly any more than he  
can understand so far, as is necessary to such  
a Belief. He is able to understand so much of  
it, as to know in general what he is required  
to believe, tho' he can have no such compleat  
and comprehensive Notion of it, as to give a  
particular and full Account of the Nature and  
Manner of Existence of that which is to be  
believed by him.

And let the Articles of Faith supposed  
necessary to Salvation according to Natural  
Religion be never so few and plain, yet  
there will still be some Men, who are unca-  
pable of understanding them in any way or  
measure; and then there will lie the same  
Objections against those Articles of Natural  
Religion, which are upon this Account ur-  
ged against their Faith in the Trinity it self;  
which, so far as it is required to be known  
and believed, is not above the Capacity of  
the Generality of Mankind; and no more is  
required

required to be believed explicitly of any, than they are capable of knowing in such a Degree as is necessary in order to such a Belief; whatever Articles of Faith be assigned in Natural or Revealed Religion, they will be above the Capacity of many Adult Persons, and of all Infants to apprehend them; who therefore according to all Religions may be Saved without the actual Knowledge of those Articles which are never so necessary to others. And what may be objected against all Religions, Natural as well as Revealed, ought in Reason to be objected against none; for there can be no force in it.

III. This Doctrine exceedingly tends to the advancement of Vertue and Holiness, and has a great influence upon the Lives and Conversations of Men.

That God the Father should send his Son, his only Begotten, and only beloved Son to be Born and to Die for us, is an endearing and amazing Act of the Divine Goodness. The Death not of a meer Man, but of the Son of God, Blessed for ever, in our stead, must needs heighten our Love of God, and our Faith and Dependance on him; our Hatred of Sin, and our Assurance of Pardon upon Repentance. This I have proved at large in Discourſing of the Incarnation and Death of the Son of God for us, and therefore shall not insist upon it here.

In

In like manner, whatever the Holy Ghost hath done, and is continually doing for us, must needs be of more weight with us, and give us quite another Notion and Apprehension of his Goodness and our own Duty, than we could have had, if we believed him to be a Creature. For unless we believe him to be God, we cannot have that devout Love and Faith, and Dependance upon him, which we ought, we cannot have that Esteem and Reverence for his Communion and Presence, which is required of us, nor that sense of the heinousness of Sin, whereby we resist, and grieve and do despight to him. That Argument of *St. Paul, what know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost?* and many other to the like purpose, would be lost, but on supposition, that the Holy Ghost is God. We can never have that Sense which it behoves us to have of our Sins committed in opposition to the Gifts and Influences of his Grace, without an acknowledgment of his Godhead. So that our Faith, and Hope, and Fear and Love is more excited and enlarged, and all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls are more disposed to the obedience of the Gospel, thro' the belief of this Doctrine of the Trinity, than they could be without it. And therefore as there is nothing absurd, or impossible to be believed in this Doctrine, so it was very reasonable and expedient that it should be revealed.

C H A P. XXV.

*Of the RESURRECTION of the  
Dead.*

**T**HE *Resurrection* of our Saviour from the Dead, was that which the Apostles chiefly insisted upon in all their Discourses: For if once they could convince Men, that Christ was Risen from the Dead, they could not fail of perswading them into a Belief of all that they Taught besides. There was no other Part of their Doctrine which could seem more strange and incredible than this; and when that, which they could with so much Difficulty be brought to believe, and which could not come to pass but by the Almighty Power of God himself, was evidently and undeniably proved to them, this must give that Credit and Authority to all their other Doctrine, that it could be no longer withstood or gain-said. This therefore is the Point which the Apostles most of all urged, knowing that if they could gain this, all the rest would follow of Course, and that every Man must of necessity be Converted to the belief of the whole Gospel of Christ, who was once convinced of his Resurrection.

And

*The Reasonableness and Certainty*

And St. Paul in his Defence before King Agrippa puts the Question, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* Acts xxvi. 8. which implies, that it is a very unreasonable thing to think, that God cannot Raise the Dead, and that therefore there was all the Reasons in the World to believe that he had raised Christ. For there was so great Evidence of his Resurrection, and so many Men daily Witnessed it at the peril of their Lives, that if their Adversaries would but allow the thing to be possible, there could be no Doubt remaining, but that Christ was indeed raised from the Dead.

The Apostle Argues that it is a very absurd thing to say, that God cannot raise the Dead. What Reason could any Man give why God cannot do it? Or how durst any Man so limit and confine the Infinite Power of God by his own Notions and Conceptions of things, as to say that the Resurrection of the Dead cannot be effected by him? This is unreasonable and absurd in the highest Degree, and therefore it is manifest that Christ is Risen, and that there is to be a General Resurrection of the Dead, since there is no other Objection that can lie against it, but the Impossibility of the thing it self. For our Resurrection is asserted in the Scriptures, as a necessary Consequence of Christ's Resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 20. and his Resurrection

was

was so well attested, that the greatest Enemies to Christianity could not deny the Evidence of the Fact, supposing the thing possible; but they would not own it possible, that such a thing should be, and upon that account rejected all the Evidence that could be produced, as tending only to prove an Impossibility, and so not to be regarded. I shall therefore shew the possibility of the Resurrection of the Dead, and that it is unreasonable to think it incredible that God should raise the Dead.

If it be incredible, that God should Raise the Dead, it must be upon one of these Two Accounts; either because he cannot, or because he will not do it. For what God both can and will do, is so far from being Incredible, that it is a most undoubted Truth. Therefore I shall

First, Prove that God is certainly able to Raise the Dead; and,

Secondly, That he certainly will do it.

1. That God is certainly able to Raise the Dead, is a thing credible in it self; and therefore ought to be esteemed incredible by no sort of Men whatsoever, tho' they have no Knowledge of any Revealed Religion, if they have but right Apprehensions concerning God. No Man can have a true Notion of God, but he must know that God is a Being of Infinite Power and Wisdom; that he made the World, and all things therein; that he preserves and sustains



sustains all Creatures, and that all things are wholly at his Will and Disposal, to do with them as he pleases; that nothing can oppose or resist his Will, or give him the least hindrance in any thing which he is pleased to undertake. How then can it seem incredible that God should raise a Dead Man to Life again, when he at first gave him his Life? And is it not as easie to restore it to him, as to give it him at first? Might we not as well dispute that it is impossible for a Man to be Born, as that it is impossible for him to be Raised from the Dead, if our own experience did not convince us of that, but not of this? God, who gave all that Power and Ability, which Natural Causes have to produce their Effects, may, if he pleases, produce the same Effects immediately by himself. For it is not because he stands in need of any help from Natural Causes, that he has appointed them, but because it seemed best to his Infinite Wisdom to appoint this Course and Order in the World.

And it is evident even to Natural Reason, that there must have been some who were immediately Created by God, and were not born of others, as Men are since, that there must have been some *First Parents*, some, who had no Parents themselves, but were of Gods immediate Creation, that there must have been some who were the First of all Mankind, and therefore could be born of no others. Since then Man must of necessity have

have been first formed by God himself, and not have come by a Natural Birth into the World ; it is evident, that God might have made as many Men and Women after this manner as he had pleased ; and he, who is the Author of our Nature, may act without it, and as much beyond and above any Natural Powers and Faculties in his Creatures, as it seems best to him. And it may as well be thought incredible, that God should at first make Man, as that he should be able to raise him up again after Death ; for Death is only the End of Nature's power of working, not of the Power of God himself ; who, as he originally made the Race of Mankind, so he appointed the Nature of Things, and gave it a stinted Power, which it cannot exceed ; but his own Power is Infinite, and no Bounds can be set to it.

When a Man is once Dead, Nature has done with him, and can never recover him to Life again ; for God ordained at first that according to the Course of Nature he should only be born, and live here a while ; not that his Life should be restored again to him after Death. But he is not so confined himself, that he cannot give Life to the Dead, but has reserved this as his own Privilege, and above any thing in Nature's Power. God, who formed *Adam* of the Dust of the ground, might have formed all

F f

Mankind

Mankind so, if he had pleased; and he can as easily raise all Mankind to Life again out of the Dust, as he made the first Man out of it.

And the Atheist, one would think, has of all Men the least pretence to scruple the Resurrection of the Dead, who must suppose that Mankind at first sprung out of the Earth as Plants do, by a Spontaneous Production; and for him to pretend that the Bodies of Men cannot be raised to Life again by an Almighty Power is as unreasonable, as any thing in Atheism it self can be.

When at certain Seasons every Year, we see things receive a New Life, as it were, according to the Course of Nature, we may well conclude, that if so strange an Alteration can proceed from Natural Causes, then surely God is able to effect that which is much more wonderful, and to raise even these Bodies of ours after they are dead and rotten in the Grave, to Life again. And since the Corn which is Sown in the Earth, *is not quickned except it die*, and will not revive and grow again and come to perfection unless it be first buried in the Ground, and undergo great Alterations there; it is a foolish thing, as the Apostle argues, to doubt of the Resurrection of the Dead, because we cannot understand the way and manner

manner of it. Let Men Answer all the Difficulties in Nature, and it will be time enough afterwards to dispute with them about a Resurrection; but when we are at a loss about the most common and obvious things, it must be great Presumption to deny the Resurrection, because we cannot comprehend it; when alas! what is there besides that we are able to comprehend? Will we presume to say that God can do nothing, but what we understand how it may be done; when every thing we see, may inform us that his Wisdom is Infinite, and *his ways past finding out*. Indeed if we understood every thing else, there might be some pretence to scruple the Resurrection, because we do not understand how it shall be. But when our Ignorance is so notorious in all other things, it is the height of Folly and Perverseness to think our selves competent Judges of such a Mystery as this. So far are we from being able to make any Estimate of God's Power, and so far is the Resurrection from being Incredible, because there may be Objections made about it, which may seem unanswerable; that if no other Answer could be given, this would be sufficient, that God can do more than we can have the least Thought or Conception of; and that it is no Argument that he cannot do what we cannot conceive how it

should be done, so long as there is nothing contrary to the Divine Nature in it, nor which implies a Contradiction, the Doctrine of the Resurrection would be very credible and certain too, whatever other Objections might be urged against it; which yet are not in themselves so formidable as they may be imagined to be.

All the Objections against the Resurrection of the Dead are either against the Resurrection of Bodies after their Corruption and Dissolution, or against the Resurrection of the same Bodies of Men which they had before their Death, because the parts of our Bodies are in a perpetual Change and Flux here, and after Death by several Accidents, as by the devouring of Humane Bodies by Men, or by Fish, or other Creatures, which are afterwards eaten by Men, it may come to pass that the same parts which Compounded one Man's Body, shall afterwards belong to anothers, and yet in the Resurrection they can belong but to one of these Bodies. But,

I. Bodies after their Corruption and the Dissolution of the Parts which compose them may be restored to Life by the Reunion of these Parts again. We have several Instances of this in Natural Philosophy that Bodies divided into never so minute Parts, tho' these Parts be mix'd and confounded

founded with the Parts of other Bodies, may by Chymical Operations be reduced to their former State and Condition, and which is of nearer affinity to the Subject in hand, after the Ashes of a Plant have been sown in a Garden fairer and larger Plants have sprung up than had been known of that kind in the place where the Experiment was made. And (1) Mr. Boyle thinks it scarce to be imagined *what Expedients to reproduce Bodies, a further Discovery of the Mysteries of Art and Nature, may lead us Mortals to.* And much less, says he, can our dim and narrow Knowledge determine what means, even Physical ones, the most wise Author of Nature and absolute Governour of the World is able to employ to bring the Resurrection to pass. And where the powers of Nature fail, we know that God is Infinite, and can want no means to effect whatever he pleases.

(1) Mr. Boyle's Consideration about the Possibility of the Resurrection.

2. We may rise with the same Bodies which we have here, notwithstanding any Change or Flux of the parts of our Bodies while we live or any Accidents after Death. It is agreeable to Reason, and to the Observations of Philosophers and Physicians to believe that the Bones and Muscles and Nerves, and all the *Essential constituent Parts* of Humane Bodies are of so firm and solid a substance as to suffer little Alteration during our Lives, when once they are come to their



(m) Dr.  
Haver's  
Osteolog.  
2d Dis-  
course of  
Accretion,  
and Nutri-  
tion.

full growth and proportion, but to continue the same till we die; and the Alterations which they undergo before Men come to their full Stature is by Addition of parts, not by the diminution of those wherewith we are born. It appears from a late Discourse of a (m) Learned Physician, that Nutrition is a supply of the Fluid Parts, and that the proper Substance of the Solid Parts suffers no Diminution, but in some extraordinary Cases, and therefore can stand in no need of Reparation but in such a Case. For *the whole Body is Vascular*, or made up of Vessels and Pipes replenished with their several Substances; so that in an *Atrophy* the Fibres become dry, and the Nerves and Vessels are contracted, and shrunk for want of the Spirits and Juices and Liquors which before filled and distended them. But the Solid Parts are of so durable a Substance, that they can suffer no Diminution, but by such Corrosives to dissolve them, as must produce Ulcers, and such as would affect the Fibres with so intolerable Pains, that *the Torments of the Stone and Gout would be moderate and easie to them; which in a Consumption would be Universal* in all parts of the Body; whereas there is no such Symptom in any Part; and in the greatest Consumptions the Bones are found to retain their entire Bigness; tho' a piece of Bone is sooner

sooner Dissolved by a Corrosive Liquor, such as *Aqua-Fortis*, than Muscular Fibres of equal quantity or weight.

It is wont to be observ'd upon this Subject, that when the Change of Parts is gradual, and in the course of some Years the Body may still be the same, as it could not be, if the Change were made all at once. A Ship or House remains the same tho' it be never so often repaired, and tho' the Materials in Succession of Time be all or most of them renewed: whereas if it should be taken to pieces all at once, and all the Materials should be changed, and new Materials of the same Figure and Dimensions should be exactly in the same manner framed and built up together in their stead, these would make another House or Ship, and not the same that was before.

But when the Parts which *constitute* the Humane Body, and give it the Denomination of the Body of this or that individual Man continue the same, the same Person has the same Body in his Old Age, that he had in his Youth, as truly as he has the same Body in Sicknes, which he had in Health; and the same under the Languishings of a Consumption, which he had in his greatest Vigour and Strength. For the Change is only in the variable and accidental Parts, which are not *necessary* to *constitute* the Body

(n) Sanctor  
De statica  
Medicina  
Sect. i.  
Aph. vi.  
lix. lx.  
Sect. iii.  
Aph. x.

of such a Man; and the *necessary constituent Parts* (tho' they were changed or altered, as in some very rare cases they may be) being so few in Comparison of the rest, which make up the Bulk of a Man's Body, can hardly be supposed by the devouring of Canibals, or by any other Accident to become the *constituent Parts* of any other Man's Body. (n) *Sanctorius* from his Static Experiments has Observed, that a very inconsiderable part of what we eat, is turned to Nourishment; and from the small proportion which the *Necessary constituent Parts* bear to the rest, and the unsuitness of them, as of Bones, &c. to nourish, it may be concluded, that little or nothing of that which turns to Nourishment, can be supposed to be of those *constituent Parts*; and considering further the great Changes which happen in our Bodies in the continual Flux of Parts, and the small Proportion again, which the *constituent, or necessary essential Parts* have to the rest, we may conclude (supposing those parts as well as others to suffer Alteration) that it is the greatest odds, that the *constituent Parts* which turn to Nourishment, do not by that Nourishment happen to belong to the *constituent Parts* of the Mans Body who is nourished by them when he comes to die. So that if a Man should live wholly upon Humane Flesh, which it is

is not to be believed that ever any Man did, yet it would perhaps be above an Hundred to one whether any *constituent Part* of his Body were made up when he died, of the *constituent Parts* of any other Man's Body. And besides, it must be granted by all, that Believe a God and a Providence, that a particular Providence may take such effectual care of us as to reserve to every Man his own Body in all the *Essential Parts* of it; *the Hairs of our Heads are all Numbered*; that is, they are as well known to God, as they could be to us, if we had told and numbered them never so exactly; and therefore much more the *necessary Parts* of us are under his Cognizance and Care.

These *necessary constituent Parts* then being the same, God may supply the rest, as he shall see fitting; and the Body will be the same after the Resurrection, that it was in this Life, tho' the Bodies of Men at the Resurrection must arise in all the Perfection of an Humane Body, and therefore must have no part wanting: For if any part of an Humane Body should be wanting, they would not have all the perfection of such a Body, tho' they should be never so perfect in all the parts which they be supposed to have. For if a Man having but one Eye, or one Ear, should be able to see or hear with

with that one better than ever any Man did with two, yet it would still be a defect in his Body to want an Eye, or an Ear.

All the uses of any one part of our Bodies are not perhaps yet fully known, and the Dependence which one part has upon another may be such, as that it may be requisite that those parts should be raised for their Relative usefulness, which may seem to have no proper use of their own after the Resurrection. The Sight is a Sense which may be capable of Improvements beyond what we now are able to conceive, as we may conclude from the Improvements which have been made by the help of Microscopes and Telescopes. And who knows, but that in the Glorified State our Eyes shall have that perfection, as to be able to discern the Contexture and Motions, and the whole Frame of those pure, Spiritual and Cœlestial Bodies; and then those parts, which now to the naked view, and much more when discerned thro' Microscopes cause so much Admiration, will be still much more admirable to behold, when they are thoroughly seen and fully understood by us; and to want those parts which may seem to be then no longer of any use, would be to want one great Argument of our praise of God in the contemplation of his Wonderful Works.

But this is mentioned only to shew that  
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an ordinary Fancy, if it be allowed to take the Liberty which some have done upon this Subject, might easily propose as probable Reasons in Defence of the Received Doctrines, as can be framed against them.

(o) The Author of *the Answers to the Orthodox* amongst the Works of *Justin Martyr*, <sup>(o) Quæst. 53.</sup> says that some parts of our Bodies, tho' they will then have no direct usefulness, yet will be raised at the last Day, to be Memorials to us of the Wisdom of God in that use which we had of them in this Life. And (p) St. *Austin* says, that the Glory of God will be magnified, in that he will have freed those Members from the Corruption to which they were subject here. However, it ought to suffice Christians that our Bodies shall be like to Christ's Body, and therefore shall have the full perfection and proportion of all the parts constituting an Human Body, as his Body had after his Resurrection. *We know that we shall be like him*, 1 Joh. iii. 2. and as for any thing further it will be time enough to know it at the Resurrection.

(p) Aug.  
Civ. Dei,  
lib. xxii.  
c. 17.

II. It is not only Credible and Reasonable to believe that God can, but likewise that he will Raise the Dead. The Revelation of his Will in his Holy Word ought to put this beyond Dispute among Christians. But besides, it appears to be requisite from the Nature



Nature of Man, consisting of Soul and Body, that there should be a Resurrection of the Body ; it is fit that the Man should be punished that Sinned, and that the Man who lived well here, and suffered for Righteousness sake, should be rewarded for it. But if the Soul only be Punished, or the Soul only be Rewarded, the Man is not rewarded or Punished ; for the Soul is but part of the Man, but Soul and Body together make up the whole Man, and therefore it is requisite that the Soul and Body should be re-united. *For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. v. 10.* For this Reason it is requisite that the Soul should be again united to the same Body ; otherwise the Soul and Body would constitute a Man, but not the same Man that was before, the Body not being the same ; for it must be the same Soul and the same Body that make the same Man. *As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. xv. 22.* the same Body therefore that died in Adam is to be made alive in Christ ; *who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself, Philip. iii. 21.* Christ himself rose with

with the same Body that was Crucified, and we are to be like him at the Resurrection, and to have our Bodies Changed into the likeness of his Glorious Body. And indeed, if a New Body were assumed how could it be a Resurrection? Which implies the Rising again of that Body, which after the Separation of the Soul was Buried in the Grave; and otherwise, as it is usually argued, one Body may be punished for the Sins committed in another.

If it be said that the Body is only the Instrument of Sensation to the Soul, but is it self capable of none, and therefore must be incapable of Rewards or Punishments. It may perhaps be Answered, that this is more than can be absolutely concluded from the Notions of Modern Philosophy against the General Sense of Mankind, and the Philosophy of all former Ages. However, the Body being unable to determine it self in its Sensations, if it have any of its own. I confess I cannot think this Argument fit to be insisted upon, in as much as no Actions can be capable of Rewards or Punishments, but such as proceed from choice.

But it must be acknowledged, that the the Soul may be capable of more Happiness or Misery, when re-united to the Body, than in its Separate State. For besides the Anguish, or the Peace and Joy of Mind, besides its own Reflections, and its proper Operations,

Operations, which the Soul is capable of in a State of Separation from the Body; it is capable of being affected with Sensations, which arise from its Union with the Body. And that these may be answerable to what a Man's Actions in this Life have been, the Soul must be United to the self same Body, so disposed and qualified to affect the Soul as it was in this Life, only with Infinitely greater, more exquisite and more lasting Degree of Pain or of Joy and Satisfaction; yet without any mixture of gross and sensual Pleasures in the Righteous, but only such as are suitable to Spiritual Bodies. And this Disposition of Body depends upon the Vertuous or Vicious Actions and Habits of Men here; for a Body by Vicious Practices and Customs prone to raging and furious Passions, insatiable Appetites, and tormenting Inclinations and Desires (without any thing to gratifie or assuage them) must have quite another effect upon a Soul, than a Body subdued to the mild and calm and obedient Temper of Religion and Vertue. And tho' God could by his Almighty power form another Body to that Frame and Disposition, which the Body of any particular Man was in, when his Soul departed out of it; yet it doth not seem agreeable to the Divine Goodness and purity, by his immediate

mediate power to frame a New Body to the depraved Temper and Inclinations of a Vicious Man. And we are so little acquainted with the Union of the Soul and Body, that for ought we know, a Soul can be United only to its proper Body. The Truth is, we know nothing of these Matters, but from the Scriptures, all besides is only Conjecture. But the Doctrine of the Scriptures is probable even to our Reason, tho' indeed it ought to over-rule Reason, especially in things which are so obscure, and so little understood by us. God has declared that he will raise these Bodies to Life again at the Day of Judgment; and whatever we may think of it, to him all things are alike easie, it is as easie for him to do, as to say it.

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## CHAP.

## C H A P. XXVI.

*Of the Reasons why Christ did not shew himself to all the People of the Jews after his Resurrection.*

**S**T. Peter speaking of Christ's Resurrection says, *him God raised up the third Day, and shewed him openly, not to all the People, but unto Witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the Dead, Acts x. 40, 41.* After his Resurrection he was shewn openly, but not to all the People; he was seen in a plain and open manner, yet not so publickly, as to make all the People Witnesses of his Resurrection. The Will and good Pleasure of God is a sufficient Reason to us of all his Actions, especially in Acts of Mercy: For it would be a strange Return made but to a *Man* for any Favour receiv'd, to be captious and quarrellsome about the manner of his bestowing it, instead of being grateful to him for it. But besides this General Reason which ought to be of Force with us in all Cases, there are Reasons peculiar to the present Case, whereby we may be able to give an Account of it, even according to our own Apprehensions of things.

I. There

I. There are Reasons peculiar to this Dispensation of Christ's Resurrection; why Christ should not shew himself to all the People, after he was risen from the dead.

II. It had not been suitable to the other Dispensations of God towards Mankind for him to do it.

III. Great Numbers of the *Jews* were given over to hardness of heart, and would not have believed, tho' they had seen Christ after his Resurrection.

IV. If they had Believed, their Conversion had not been a greater proof of the Truth of his Resurrection, than their Unbelief has been.

V. The Power of his Resurrection manifested in the Miraculous Gifts bestowed upon the Apostles was as great a Proof of his Resurrection, as the Personal Appearance of our Saviour himself could have been.

i. There are Reasons peculiar to this Dispensation of his Resurrection, why Christ should not shew himself to all the People after he was risen from the Dead. Christ after his Resurrection was to act according to the Majesty of the Divine Nature, not according to the Infirmities and Condescension of the Humane; the time of his Converse with Men was at an end at his Death, and then another method and manner of Dispensation was to begin; he was then to Converse only with his particular

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Friends and Favourites, to satisfy them of his Resurrection, and to instruct and enable them both by their Doctrine and Miracles to satisfy others. It could not be suitable to the Dignity of his Majesty, which he had assumed after his Resurrection, to submit himself to the Censures of his Enemies; he had suffered enough from them already in the State of his Humiliation, and must he never be above the Suspicion and Scrutiny of their Malice? Shall not his Resurrection free him from it? When they saw him hanging upon the Cross, they cried out with upbraiding and insolent Scorn, that they would believe in him, if he would come down from thence; but neither did they deserve such a Miracle to be wrought at their Pleasure, who thus called for it, nor was it suitable to the Divine Dispensation that it should be wrought. It was neither fitting that he should save himself from Death, nor that he should appear to them after he was risen from the Dead. He was to Die for our Redemption, and as we had wanted the Argument from his Resurrection for the Truth of our Religion, if he had come down from the Cross; so if he had appeared to all the *Jews*, we had wanted other Evidence; which, as I shall shew, at least amounts to all the Proof which that could have given.

In the State of his Humiliation our Saviour was pleased to suffer himself to be exposed

posed to *the contradiction of Sinners*, and to all their Affronts and Injuries ; but when *this their Hour and the Power of Darknes* was once past, they were to see him no more, but with confusion of Face and terrour of Mind ; yet his Mercy was still the same towards them ; one of the greatest Persecutors was converted by a Voice from Heaven, the Son of Man speaking to him from thence, that he might be the happy Instrument in the Conversion of others, and a *Pattern* to them of the *long suffering* of Christ, *1 Tim. i. 16*. But his manifestation of himself to *St. Paul* at his Conversion was with dreadful Awe and Majesty, not in that mild and gracious Glory, in which he was seen by *St. Stephen* ; and it is reserved for those who persecuted and *pierced him*, to look upon him with Consternation and Anguish at the Last Day, *Rev. i. 7*.

2. It had not been suitable to the other Dispensations of God towards Mankind for Christ to be shown openly to all the People. God might work such astonishing Miracles, and strike such Terrors into the Minds of Men, as to make it impossible for any one to doubt of his Existence, or of the Truth of his Word ; but he doth not all which he can do, but what he in his Wisdom sees fit to be done ; he doth not use all the Means which some Men may conceit he might use, but leaves Men without excuse, and then

requires their Faith and Obedience at their peril. To imagine that Christ should have appeared promiscuously unto all, is as unreasonable, as to suppose that God should communicate himself to all alike, or that he should have spoken from Heaven to Men without the Message and Ministry of his Prophets. For when Christ was risen from the Dead, he was no longer to act like a Mortal Man, but as in his Glorified State as our Lord and King, and as God in our Humane Nature, now no longer subject to any of its Imperfections; and therefore he was no more to come himself to the People, as he had done in the State of his Humiliation, but to send his Apostles and Disciples among them, as he had before his Incarnation sent the Prophets.

3. Great Numbers of the *Jews* were given up to hardness of heart, and would not have believed, tho' they had seen Christ after his Resurrection. Those, who when they had seen our Saviour's Miracles, had vilified them, and blasphemed the Holy Ghost, by whom they were wrought, had their hearts hardened, that *seeing they might see and not perceive, and be converted.* And of this Number the Chief Priests and Elders must be supposed to be, who hired the Soldiers to Contradict and Stifle the Belief of his Resurrection with a false Story of their own Invention. The Chief Priests before had Consulted

to put *Lazarus* to Death, when he was undeniably known to have been raised from the Grave, *John* xii. 10. So far were they from being brought to a Belief in Christ by the sight of *Lazarus*, that they fully verified that Saying, that there are some, who *will not believe, tho one rose from the Dead*. *Lazarus* was shewn openly to all the People, and lived among them for many years after he had been restored to Life again, when he had been Dead four Days; and they would not believe, tho they saw and conversed with him, but were the more enraged at it; Christ himself therefore after his Resurrection did not vouchsafe them his presence, but used other means which were more proper.

4. If the *Jews* had believed in Christ, their Conversion had not been a greater Proof of the Truth of his Resurrection, than their Unbelief has been. Their stubbornness and hardness of heart was foretold by the Prophets, with their Dispersion, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; and the Propagation of the Gospel (according to the Prediction likewise of the Prophets) in so Miraculous a manner, not only at a distance, but in *Judea*, and in *Jerusalem* itself, notwithstanding all the Opposition which the *Jews* could make, gave as great a Testimony to it, as their Favour and Protection could have done. And therefore it was just with God rather to

leave them to the hardness of their own hearts, than to use such further Methods with them as were unsuitable to the Divine Dispensation in the Mystery of our Redemption, and would either have only hardened them to a greater Degree, or at least would not have proved more effectual towards the Manifestation of the Truth of the Gospel.

5. The Power of Christ's Resurrection manifested in the Miraculous Gifts bestowed upon the Apostles, was as great a proof of his Resurrection, as the Personal Appearance of our Saviour himself could have been. Our Saviour shewed himself to *Witnesses chosen before of God, to be Witnesses of all things which he did both in the Land of the Jews and in Jerusalem*, Acts x. 39, 41. these Men knew his Life and Doctrine, they had been Instructed by him, and had forsaken all for him, and according to his Promise were *endued with Power from on high*, to enable them to testify to the whole World, that they had not only seen him, but had often Converſed with him after he rose from the Dead. And one of their Chief Qualifications was, that they were but a few, poor and ignorant Men without Force or Policy, without any Art or Contrivance; they could tell a plain Truth, but could neither feign nor dissemble; if they had been more in Number, the Conversion of the World had been so much the less

less Miraculous; and they were not chosen out of the Scribes and Elders who had been used to Artifices and Falshood, but had them all along their Enemies, and opposed to their Craft and Power an honest simplicity of Mind, that neither knew what belonged to Deceit, nor feared any in so good a Cause; nor were they in the least discouraged to see their own and all other Nations against them. *God had chosen the Foolish things of the World to confound the Wise; and God had chosen the weak things of the World to confound the things which are mighty, 1 Cor. i. 27.*

These Men under all Neecessities, and Persecutions, and Dangers, and Torments, both Living and Dying Witnessed that they had seen Christ alive after he had been Crucified, and tho' they were but very few in Comparison of their Enemies, yet considered as Witnesses they were many; for *he was seen by above five hundred at once*, which is a vast number in any matter of Evidence; and if so many Men be not a sufficient Testimony, no number of Men could have been. That which is demonstrated but in one way, is as certain as if it were demonstrable in never so many Methods; and he who sees a thing plainly with his two Eyes, may be as sure of it, as if he had never so many Eyes to see it withal. *It is written in the Law of Moses, that the Testimony of two Men is true, or Credible, and to be relied upon for Truth,*



*John* viii. 17. and it is the Law and Practice of all Nations to content themselves with a small number of sufficient Witnesses in proof of the most important Affairs. And if these *Witnesses chosen before of God* spoke, and acted, and suffered, as no Men would or could have done, if they had not been well assured of what they testified, and assisted from above in preaching the Gospel; the Truth of the Resurrection of Christ is as infallibly delivered to us by their Testimony, as it could have been by the Testimony of never so many more: for all that never so many others could have done, would have been but the same thing over again, which these Men certified by *many infallible Proofs*; and what is once infallibly proved, is as certain as if all the World should agree in declaring it. It is not the number of Witnesses, but the Character and Qualifications of the Persons, and the Evidence it self in its full force and circumstances, which are chiefly to be regarded in Matters of this Nature. If but a few Men can make it sufficiently appear, as the Apostles did, by undeniable Miracles, that what they say is true, and that God himself confirms the Truth of it, they then appeal to every Man's own Senses, before whom they work their Miracles, and make every one that sees them a Witness to the Truth of their Doctrine; God himself bears Witness to it, and the *Jews* might have said in this,

as they did in a very different Case, *What need we any further Witnesses? for we our selves have heard of their own mouths, in the Miraculous Gift of Tongues, or seen it with our own Eyes, in the many wonderful Works which were continually wrought in the most publick manner, in Testimony of the Resurrection of Christ.*

Our Blessed Saviour therefore gave as full proof of his Resurrection, as if he had appear'd in the Temple, or in the midst of *Jerusalem*, to the whole People of the *Jews*. For this had not been more effectual to the Conversion of most of them, nor more sufficient to evidence the Truth of the Gospel, than his Appearance to his Disciples was; and if the *Jews* had unanimously believed, it could not have contributed more to convince Men of the Truth of the Resurrection, than their Unbelief has done; he sent his Apostles with a Miraculous Power, as convincing as his own Appearance could have been; and all things considered, the *Jews* afford us as full Evidence in behalf of the Gospel by opposing it, as they could have done by their compliance with it. And since we have sufficient Testimony to resolve our Faith into the Divine Veracity, the certainty is the same, whether the Witnesses be more or fewer, because it depends upon the veracity of God, which is always the same, whatever the means be, by which our Faith is resolved into it.

## C H A P. XXVII.

*Of the Forty Days in which Christ remained upon Earth after his Resurrection, and of the manner of his Ascension.*

**O**UR Blessed Saviour had certified his Disciples of his Resurrection in such a manner as to give them *many infallible Proofs* of it, or else it is impossible for any thing to be infallibly proved; and that which is chiefly to be considered in this matter is, that he was seen by them not once but often, not for a short time, or at a hasty Interview, but for *forty days* together, and then he performed the common Actions of Humane Life, *he did eat and drink with them*, and discoursed with them of the things relating to his Kingdom. *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his Passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, Acts i. 3.* That which I here design is, to make some Observations upon the Conversation that our Saviour had with his Disciples, during the Forty days between his Resurrection and his Ascension, and upon the manner of his leaving them, when he ascended into Heaven.

2. The Scriptures acquaint us that our Saviour was seen of his Disciples Forty Days, or that he vouchsafed them his presence the greatest

greatest part of that time which he remained upon Earth after his Resurrection. But in what manner all that time was spent with them, we are no where told ; which is no wonder, if we consider how much of his former Life is concealed from us.

In the Scriptures, which are written for our Instruction, and in the plainest and sincerest manner in the World to inform us of all things necessary to our Salvation, we have nothing taken notice of, for Ostentation nor for Ornament, but many things omitted in the Life of Christ, which are thought needful in Humane Authors, to make up a compleat History. We have no more mentioned of his Parentage than was necessary to make it evident that he was descended from *David*, and born of a Virgin, as the Prophets had foretold of him. When he was born, we read that the Shepherds and the Wise-Men came to Worship him; that he was Circumcised, that he was brought to *Jerusalem* to be presented to the Lord, and that he was carried into *Aegypt* to avoid *Herod's* Cruelty, and hereby known Prophecies were fulfilled. Afterwards he was brought to *Nazareth* upon the death of *Herod*, and from that time we read no more of him 'till the twelfth Year of his Age, when he Disputed with the Doctors in the Temple. And then we are told that he went down to *Nazareth*, and was subject to his Mother, and to *Joseph*, and in general Terms, that he *encreased in Wisdom and Stature,*

*Stature, and in favour with God and Man; as it was before said of him, that he grew and waxed strong in Spirit, filled with Wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him, Luke ii. 40, 52. The next time we read any thing of him, is when he was about Thirty years of Age, and came to John to be Baptized.*

*Thus not only during his Infancy and Childhood there is little related of our Blessed Saviour, but his riper years are passed over in Silence; in all which time we may be sure that there was no Speech or Action of so Divine a Person, but what well deserved the observation of all that knew him, and was more worthy of mention in History, than all the Renowned Adventures and Exploits, or than the Wise or Witty Sayings which adorn the Lives of the Greatest among the Sons of Men. But Modesty, Humility, and a Contempt of the praise of Men were some of the great and useful Doctrines in which he came to instruct Mankind; and he could not do this more effectually than by his own Example, in leading a mean and obscure Life, little known or taken notice of in the World, till two or three years before he was to leave it by a Cruel and Infamous Death. He did not chuse to spend his time in places of publick Resort and Converse; and when he Disputed in the Temple, yet nothing of the particulars is mentioned. This obscure and unknown Person was to rebuke and comptroll the Pride and Vanity of the Popular Scribes and Pharisees.*

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And after he had appeared in the World, very much of his Life was spent in privacy and retirement; not many of his Discourses are delivered down to us, and the greatest part of his Actions are omitted. For if they had been all written and described in their several Circumstances, many Volumes must have been taken up in the Narrative of them; insomuch that St. John supposes that even the World itself could not have contained the Books that should have been written, Joh. xxi. 25. that is, as we might express it in our Language, he did a world of things more than these, which are related of him; and in the same sense of the Word, St. James says, that the Tongue is a world of Iniquity, Jam. iii. 6. The meaning of St. John is, that hardly any words could express how many other things were done by our Saviour, besides those which he had set down. Christ might have employed some accurate Historian to compose the Annals of his whole Life with the greatest exactness imaginable; but he was pleased to be represented to the World very imperfectly by such as knew nothing of what belonged to the writing History any farther than to be able to tell the strict and necessary Truth. The Evangelists wrote his Life with the same Humility with which he lived.

And it is observable, that when St. John says that there were so many other things which Jesus did, he speaks with relation to the things done



done by him after his Resurrection, having just before given an account of what our Saviour had said to St. Peter. And so in the foregoing Chapter, when St. John has declared how our Saviour certified St. Thomas of the Truth of his Resurrection, he adds *and many other Signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book, but these are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name,* Joh. xx. 30, 31. So that we are acquainted with no more than was necessary, of what pass'd between our Saviour and his Disciples after his Resurrection, the rest concerns us not to know; it was for their Instruction and encouragement in their Duty, and they were empower'd to teach and instruct us. We know that *beginning at Moses and all the Prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself,* Luke xxiv. 27. but we are no where told what were the Particulars of his Exposition; only we are sure that the Apostles in their Explications of the Old Testament followed the Interpretations which he had given. We read that he was *seen of them forty days, and spoke of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*; from whence we may conclude, that the time between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ, was chiefly spent in comforting and instructing them, and in expounding to them the Scriptures concerning his

his Passion and Resurrection, and The coming of the Holy Ghost after his Ascension.

St. Paul mentions, that *he was seen by above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part were then still alive to testify the Truth* of what he said, 1 Cor. xv. 6. tho' this Particular, however remarkable, is omitted by the Evangelists; for they relate things just as they saw it needful upon every Occasion, and since they said enough to convince Men, they were not careful to say all that might be said, they were ready to die in Testimony of what they delivered, and daily wrought Miracles to confirm it; and therefore were not solicitous to lay together all the Particulars, or to put them into any exact Order and Method; they declared what they knew, and their Miracles proved it, and they depended not upon such Niceties as Humane Proofs have need of.

We may reasonably conclude then, notwithstanding the silence of the Sacred Writers, that when Christ had once fully manifested himself to his Disciples, and satisfied\* them in his Resurrection, the rest of the time till his Ascension was most of it spent with them in Divine Discourses for their Instruction and Comfort; such as those are which we read in the Evangelists, one of whom declares that a full account of all that pass'd between him and his Disciples was more than could well be express'd. That happy time was employ'd in pure and Spiritual Joys and Contemplations,  
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in forming and preparing them for the Reception of the Holy Ghost.

As soon as *Mary Magdalen* knew our Lord after his Resurrection, she fell at his feet to Worship him, and would touch his Sacred Body, *Matt. xxviii. 9. Joh. xx. 17.* For this Reason perhaps too, as well as out of Devotion to him, that she might be able to give the Apostles the better account of his being risen again. But he forbade her, saying, *touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father,* and then sends her to his Disciples, to his Brethren, as he with infinite Love and Condescension styles them. He was not yet ascended, or was not then about to ascend, but to stay many days upon Earth, and there would be time enough for her nearer approaches to him; either for the encrease and confirmation of her Faith, or for her Acknowledgment and Adoration. After his Resurrection Christ made himself known to his Disciples by degrees, and by several Appearances to them at distant times, in divers Places, and in different manners; he suffered them to doubt of that great Article of our Faith for a while, that he might overcome their Unbelief, and extort a Conviction from them by such means, as that no Man unless he would be very unreasonable and obstinate, should pretend any Cause to doubt of it afterwards. But when he had thoroughly convinc'd them of his Resurrection, we may conclude from what we read of his Conversing with them,

them, that from that time he admitted them to a freer and more intimate Communication with himself, and Discourſed with them in the moſt mild and gracious and inſtructive manner of all which it concerned them to know pertaining to his Kingdom, or which they were capable then of knowing, before the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt; ſometimes perhaps vouchſafing his Preſence to one, and ſometimes to others of them, and moſt commonly to them altogether, when they were aſſembled, as we find they generally were. And when he withdrew himſelf, it was becauſe their Mortal State would not bear a conſtant and uninterrupted Attendance for ſo long a time upon their Bleſſed Maſter; and becauſe it was requiſite that they by degrees ſhould be accuſtomed to endure his Abſence, and to *walk by Faith, not by Sight*; and after his Aſcenſion, the Holy Ghoſt the Comforter did not immediately come upon his Departure from them, but their Faith was to be exerciſed in the expectation of him for the ſpace of Ten Days, and then his Promise was to be fulfilled in the fitteſt and moſt proper Season, on the Feaſt of *Pentecoſt*.

In few words, *Chriſt was ſeen of them*, ſays the Scripture, *forty Days*; which implies that theſe for the moſt part were ſpent in his Preſence; and we are in the ſame place told how this time was employ'd, in *ſpeaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*.

II. We may obſerve the manner how our Saviour left his Diſciples, when he aſcended up

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from them into Heaven. He had before prepared them to expect his Ascension; for besides what he had said to them before his death, immediately upon his Resurrection he sent this Message to his Disciples by *Mary Magdalen*, *Go to my Brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God, Joh. xx. 17.* They were in hopes, it seems, that he would at this time have restored again the Kingdom to Israel, and did not think he would have left them, before that, which they so much desired had been accomplished. However, taking his Leave of them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father, which says he ye have heard of me. And whilst he was giving them repeated Assurances that this Promise should be most effectually fulfilled, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their sight; he was not snatch'd away from them by a swift and violent motion, like *Elijah*, and carried up in a fiery Chariot, which might dazle their sight, that they could not discern him in his Ascent, but he was lifted up and removed from them leisurely, and by degrees, they looked steadfastly towards Heaven as he went up, by a visible and easie motion, and they had a clear view of him, 'till at last a Cloud received him out of their sight. It is probable that all the Disciples to the Number of about an hundred and twenty, mentioned *Acts i. 15.* were present to behold the Ascent of our Saviour. (q) The Apostle

(q) Apud  
Euseb. Hist.  
lib. i.  
c. ult.

St. *Thaddeus* declared, tho' this (as well as many other things) is not inserted into the Scriptures, that a great multitude of the Saints and Heavenly Host went up with him; we read of the Appearance of two Angels upon this Occasion, who acquainted the Disciples, *that this same Jesus whom they had thus evidently seen taken up from them into Heaven, should so come in like manner, as they had seen him go into Heaven.* And St. *Paul* informs us that the manner of his Coming at the last Day will be with his mighty Angels, or the Angels of his Power, *2 Thes. i. 7.* From whence we may conclude, according to the Account of St. *Thaddeus*, that the Holy Angels visibly attended him in his Ascension.

The Disciples were all much surprized at a thing so wonderful, and stood gazing up into Heaven after him, 'till they were certified not only by their own Senses, but by the Message of the Angels that he was gone from them into Heaven, no more to be expected from thence, till the Day of Judgment.

We have therefore the plainest and fullest Evidence that can be desired, both of the Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour. He shewed himself alive to his Disciples after his Passion by many infallible Proofs, he was seen of them forty days, and Converſed and Discourſed with them, tho' we are not told after what manner, and by what Intervals of time he was pleased to vouchſafe them his Preſence; this being concealed from us, as very many of the



Particulars are of his former Life before his Crucifixion. But at the end of the space of *forty days*, whilst he was in the midst of them, he ascended into Heaven in the sight of them all, in such a manner, that they distinctly saw and beheld him, and kept their Eyes fix'd upon him in his Ascension, and a Vision of Angels besides informed them, that he is to return in the like manner, when he shall come to Judge the World.

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C H A P. XXVIII.

*Why some Works of Nature are more especially ascribed to God; why Means was sometimes used in the working of Miracles, and why Faith was sometimes required of those, upon whom, or before whom Miracles were wrought.*

I. **A**LL the Powers of Natural Causes proceeding from God, that may justly be ascribed to him, which is wrought by them, for he works as truly by Second Causes, as by his own direct and immediate Power, in producing any Effect. The Order and Frame of Nature was Originally by his Appointment, and by his Care and Providence and Influence it is upheld; and therefore the Scriptures ascribe the effects of Natural Agents to God as the Author of them; because these can do nothing but by his Support and Influence, and the continuance and preservation of Natural Causes in the production of their Effects for so many Ages in one constant

constant Tenour is a manifest and wonderful Demonstration of the Divine Power and Wisdom.

But those things may be said more especially to be done by God himself, whereby upon some extraordinary Occasion his Power and his Will are more particularly manifested, or his Promise is fulfilled; for in those things his Care and Providence is more concerned to bring them to pass; and therefore God may employ a more than ordinary concurrence to sustain and influence the Powers of Nature that they may not fail in such Cases to produce their Effects according to their usual and settled Course.

II. Miracles are more peculiarly the Works of God, because they are wrought without the concurrence or subserviency of Natural Means. For tho' sometimes outward Means were used in the Miraculous Curing of Diseases, yet they were such as could have no effect in the Cure, but rather the contrary; as when the Man that was born blind, recovered his Sight by washing in the Pool of *Siloam* at our Saviour's Command, after his Eyes had been anointed with Clay made of Dust and Spittle. The Ointment made of Dust and Spittle was so far from having any effect towards the Cure, that it would have been much more likely to have put out the eyes of a Man that had seen; and the washing afterwards could only remove that which was so far from being a Remedy, that it must have been an obstruction to the best sight.

As many Miraculous Cures were wrought by our Saviour without any more than a word speaking, and sometimes even without so much as that,

to shew that he had no need of Means; so when any Means were used, they were such as apparently could not tend to the Cure, and were not used as Remedies, but as Circumstances, in the working his Miracles to raise the Attention of the Beholders, to imprint what was done the deeper upon their Memories, and to give the greater Credibility to the History of his Miracles. For all matter of Fact is to be proved or disproved by Circumstances; and the more Circumstances concur in any Action, the less liable it is to Mistake or Imposture. Our Saviour therefore was pleas'd that his Miracles should always be accompanied with remarkable Circumstances, which were sometimes of one kind, and sometimes of another, the better to work upon the variety of Mens Tempers and Dispositions; but whatever outward Means was at any time used by him, it could have the Nature only of a Circumstance, and was no more proper and effectual to produce the Miracle than any other might have been. Some he touched, some he only spoketo, and others he sent to the High-Priest, that he might be a Witness of the Cure. Now the touch, the speaking, or the sending could have no effect as outward Means, but only as they were attended with an inward and Divine efficacy. But all these were considerable Circumstances to excite the Observation of those who were present at these Cures, and to preserve the Remembrance of them to Posterity.

III. Tho' our Saviour had the most absolute and unconfined Power of working Miracles at all times, and before all Persons, whensoever he pleased,

fed, yet we may observe that he sometimes refused to exercise it. For tho' he could always do his Marvellous Works, yet it was not fit that they should be always done, but then only when they might be useful and serviceable to the Ends for which they were wrought, and to his Design of coming into the World, to manifest himself by working them. And that this was the Reason why our Saviour did sometimes require Faith as a Qualification in them who came to be healed, and at other times refused to work his Miracles before Unbelievers, will be evident, if we consider, that

1. Christ had given undeniable proof of his Miraculous Power in many Instances, before he required Faith, as a Condition in such as came to him to see his Miracles, and to receive the benefit of them. When the *Jews* demanded a Sign of our Saviour, *Job. ii. 18.* he had wrought before them the greatest of all his Miracles, in St. (r) *Jerom's* Judgment, by casting the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple. But they were so unreasonable as upon this very account to ask for another Miracle: *what Sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?* Whereupon our Saviour signifies to them that he would rise again from the Dead; and this was no refusal, but only a short delay of his working other Miracles; for at that very *Pasover* when he was in *Jerusalem* in the Feast-day many believed in his Name, when they saw the Miracles which he did. And then the first time we find Faith required as a Disposition or Preparation in Men to have Miracles wrought for their Cure, or their Conviction, is *Matt. xiii. 58.*

(r) Comment. in *Matt. xxi. 15.*

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*Mark vi. 5.* besides the rejecting of the Scribes and Pharisees, *Matt. xii. 38.* And before the time to which these Texts have Relation, Christ had Cured *all manner of Diseases*, and cast out many Devils, and his Fame was spread abroad throughout all the Region round about Galilee, and even throughout all Syria, *Matt. iv. 23, 24. Mark i. 28.* He had Cured the Centurion's Servant at a distance, and had restored to Life the Daughter of *Jairus* a Ruler of the Synagogue. Where it may be observed, that he commended the Faith of the Centurion, tho' the Cure was wrought upon his Servant; that he Exhorted the Father not to be afraid, but to believe, when his Fear or Faith could have no influence upon his dead Daughter. He had cast out a Legion of Devils at once, and permitted them to enter into the Herd of Swine, to convince even the Sadducees, if any thing could convince them, that they were Evil Spirits which he had cast out, *Mat. viii. 13. Mark v. 9, 22.* And when our Saviour's Miraculous Power had thus manifested itself upon all sorts of Persons, upon the Absent, upon the Dead, and upon others, who could neither hope for, nor desire relief of him, and this in the sight of many who were still Unbelievers, and of some who charged him with casting out Devils by *Beelzebub*, *Matt. xii. 24. Luke xi. 15.* it was highly reasonable, that he should afterwards require a Belief of what he had already done, and was again able to do, before he would extend his Healing Power towards Men, and that he should work no new Miracles for the Conviction of such as disregarded and disbelieved all that he had done before.





viction, had in all probability seen Miracles wrought by him before, which they would not believe, and that was Reason enough, why no more should be wrought for them, to be despised, as the former had been : Or however our Saviour's Miracles were so publicly and frequently wrought, that they might have seen them, either before or afterwards, though they were not done purposely for them, when they required it. Those, of whom Christ at any time required Faith, before he would work Miracles, were either such as had some malicious and captious Prejudice against him, or such as came to be cured of their Diseases and Infirmities.

(1.) As for the Captious and Malicious, there was, great Reason why they should be rejected, and no Miracles should be wrought for them. We read that *he did not many mighty works in his own Country, because of their Unbelief*, Matth. xiii. 58. But though he did not many mighty Works there, yet he did some, which indeed were not many in comparison of what he did in other Places. And there was a particular Reason why he did no more there, because it was his own Country, and they upbraided him with his mean Birth and Education ; whereupon Jesus seeing them *offended in him, said unto them, A Prophet is not without Honour, save in his own Country, and in his own House* ; and so, as it immediately follows, *he did not many mighty*

mighty Works there because of their Unbelief.

He had done many wonderful Works in the adjacent Countries, and his Fame was spread throughout all *Galilee*; but he, who knew the Hearts of all Men, (x)

saw how unsuccessful all his Works would be upon his own unhappy Country-Men, who had been so little moved with what they had heard of him, and with

(x) *Non quod etiam, illis incredulis, facere non potuerit virtutes multas, sed ne multas faciens virtutes, civis incredulos condemnaret. Hier. ad loc.*

what many of them probably had seen him do in other Places, that they only derided and vilified him: And he, who had so tender a Compassion for all Mankind, and with great Affection wept over *Jerusalem*, could not but have such a Concern for his own Country, as to refrain the working of those Miracles, which he had otherwise designed, foreseeing, that they would only serve to aggravate their Guilt, and encrease their Damnation, till by his Resurrection he should give an undeniable Evidence of his Divine Power, and then should send his Disciples among them after his Ascension, to whom they would have greater regard, as to Strangers, against whom they had not that unjust and foolish Prejudice. For we never read, that the Apostles did any where forbear to work Miracles, because of Unbelief, but in all Places, and among all Persons they showed forth the wonderful Works of God. But when the Works of Christ,

which were so wonderful, and so well known in all Parts of *Galilee*, had so ill effect upon those of his own Country : *St. Mark* says, That he could there do no mighty Work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them, and he marvelled because of their Unbelief, *Mark* vi. 5, 6. He wrought such Miracles as his infinite Goodness meerly drew from him, and then wondered at the Obstinaey of their Unbelief, which hindred him from working any more. For there are some things which God himself cannot do, not for want of Power, but because it would imply an Imperfection in him, a Defect of Power, and a Contradiction to his Divine Nature to do them. *God cannot lye, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself,* 2 *Tim.* ii. 13. *Tit.* i. 2. He can act nothing unbecoming his own Wisdom and Goodness ; he cannot do Miracles, when he sees they will be to no good purpose, but will be abused to a very ill one. Yet to shew his Compassion, and to manifest that his Power was not restrained in it self, but that their Unbelief had restrained it from them, he laid his Hands upon the Sick and healed them, but did no more ; for he can do nothing improper and unfit to be done.

The requiring of more Miracles, when sufficient had been wrought already, was a *Tempting* and *Provoking* of God, it was impiously to bid *Defiance* to his Power, and

to Challenge him to do whatever they durst demand of him. Our Saviour therefore rebukes the Scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees for Seeking after a Sign, *Matth.* xii. 39. xvi. 2. But the first time, he had wrought a Miracle just before in the Cure of the Man, whose Hand was withered, and of the blind and dumb Man, who was possessed with a Devil; and when they still required farther Signs, and being unmoved with what had been already done, they had now charged him with casting out Devils by *Belzebul*, our Lord had great Reason to refuse to work any more Miracles before such obstinate and ungrateful Men, which he saw were so far lost upon them, that that served only to render them altogether unpardonable in Blaspheming the Holy Ghost; and therefore he tells them, That there was no other Sign left for them, who had not yet incurred that Sin which was never to be forgiven, but the Resurrection of the Son of Man. This was a Sign which might convince the most Incredulous, and which denied to none, but was reserved as the last means. And several things which were done and said by Christ in private, were not to be divulged till after his Resurrection, because before they might fall under Suspicion; but *that*, and the Miracles wrought by vertue of it, would sufficiently prove whatsoever his Disciples should say of him. When they again demanded

a Sign, he had a little before healed great Multitudes, and had fed several Thousands by Miracle in the Wilderness, and therefore he again refers this *wicked and adulterous Generation of Men to the Sign of the Prophet Jonas.*

We have as little Reason to imagine, that our Saviour should work Miracles to gratifie the Curiosity of *Herod*, *Luke xxiii. 8.* who *hoped to have seen some Miracle done by him;* or that he should expose his Divine Power to *Herod's* Contempt and Mockery, when he had so lately wrought a Miracle in curing the Ear of *Malchus*, who was so far from believing in him, that he was one of them who came to apprehend him. It was an Act of Mercy to Cure this Man, but to work Miracles only to give Men an occasion to vilifie that Power by which they were done, could be neither worthy of God, nor any Charity to Men, but it would have been unsuitable to the Character and Authority of Christ, to debase himself to a compliance with them, who used him with such Scorn and Derision, and only reviled and tempted him. *Herod* was disappointed in his hope and expectation of seeing a Miracle, and was not denied it for want of Faith: For he believed that Christ had wrought Miracles, and supposed that *John the Baptist*, whom he had Beheaded, *was risen from the dead*, and that *therefore mighty Works did shew forth themselves in him*, *Matth. xiv. 2.* But perceiving

ceiving him not to be *John the Baptist*, he set him at naught.

(2.) In the case of those, who came to desire his help for the Cure of themselves and others, though they had not seen any Miracle wrought by him before, yet it was reasonable that Christ should work no Miracle for them, if they wanted Faith in what he had already wrought, and did not believe him able to perform, what they would seem to expect and desire him to do. When he had given so many Demonstrations of a Divine Power, he might justly expect an Acknowledgment and Belief of it in all, that came to him, and would receive any Benefit from it. He might surely bestow his Favours and Benefits upon his own Terms; and no Terms could be more reasonable, than that those who came to ask them should really believe, that he was able to bestow them, and should apply themselves to him with an expectation to receive what they asked of him: Otherwise to come to him for Cure, was no better than to *Tempt*, to Mock and Deride him; it was to ask what they did not believe he could bestow; but they resolv'd only to try what he could do, supposing that if they received no good, yet however there could be no hurt in the Experiment.

Now can any Man think, that the Miracles, which Christ wrought, were to be bestowed upon no better Considerations than



these? Or that those were in any measure worthy to be Cured, who came with so indifferent an Opinion of him, and with so little expectation of Relief? Christ wanted no opportunities of shewing his Power; he had shewn it in many and wonderful Instances, and would do it again as often as he saw occasion, upon fit and proper Objects: But if they so little regarded what he had already done, as not to believe that he had done it, and could again perform the same, they but ill deserved what they came for; the Divine Power and Goodness was not thus to be debased and exposed, as to be employed in the Cure of Men, who asked, what they did not believe he could perform, but only thought it would cost them nothing to make the Tryal, and for that Reason made Application to him. Our Saviour therefore says to the Father, who came to him in behalf of his Deaf and Dumb Son; *If thou canst believe all things are possible to him, that believeth;* and upon that humble and passionate Declaration, *Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief,* the evil Spirit was cast out of his Son, *Mark ix. 23. 24.*

The End and Design of Christ's Miracles required, that those, who were Cured by him, should believe in him. For they were wrought with a design to convince Men that he was the Son of God, and that he was come not so much to Cure their Bodies, as

to save their Souls, and he forgave their Sins at the same time that he healed them of their Diseases, *Mark ii. 5.* And since Faith is so necessary a Doctrine of the Gospel, it was as requisite that Christ should teach this, as any other Doctrine: But how could he do it more properly and more effectually than by requiring Faith in those who came to be healed? If they would partake of his Mercy, they must qualify themselves for it, by believing that he was the great Prophet and Messias, who was then so much expected, and of whom it was foretold, that he should make *the Blind to see, and the Lame to walk, and the Deaf to hear, &c.* *Luke vii. 22. Isa. xxxv. 5.* And unless their Bodily Cure did conduce to the Cure of their Souls by Faith and Repentance, it would be but ill bestowed upon them, and therefore with great Reason might be denied them. And upon this Account we find our Blessed Saviour both requiring Faith in some, and rewarding it in others, to whom his miraculous Power was extended, *Luke viii. 48. xviii. 42.* And St. Paul perceiving that the Cripple at *Lystra* had Faith to be healed, immediately healed him without being ask'd to do it, *Acts xiv. 9.*

2. Faith in the Miracles of Christ is required of Men in all Ages of the World, though Miracles are ceased; and if this be Reasonable now, it could not but be fitting then

then, that those who came to Christ, should believe in him for the sake of the Miracles, which they had been certified that he had done upon others. For Miracles, when they are fully attested, are as sufficient a Ground of Faith, as if we had seen them done; and to manifest that they are so, our Saviour might require Belief in his former Miracles, of those who expected any Advantage from such as they desired him to do. If they would give no Credit to the Miracles, which were so notorious, and so abundantly testified by Multitudes who saw them done, how should others believe in Times to come, when no more Miracles should be wrought for the Conviction of Unbelievers? Might no Man be required to believe, unless he saw the Miracles himself? Then how should the Church subsist in future Ages, when Miracles would be no longer wrought, but were for great Reasons to be withheld? We must now believe upon the Account of the Miracles which were then done, and why therefore should they not be required to believe upon the Account of them, who lived at the very Time, and in the same Country where they were wrought, though they had never seen them? Our Saviour in these Instances might introduce that Method, and establish the Evidence and Certainty of those Means and Motives, whereby Faith was to be produced in Men of all succeeding Ages,  
and

and might hereby signifie and declare, that he requires the same Faith of us from the Testimony of others, that he would do, if we had seen and experienced his miraculous Power our selves.

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CH A P. XIX.

*Of the Ceasing of Prophecies and Miracles.*

Prophecies are generally of more Concernment, and afford greater Evidence and Conviction in future Ages, than when they were first delivered. For it is not the Delivery, but the Accomplishment of Prophecies, which gives Evidence to the Truth of any Doctrin: The Events of Things in the Accomplishment of Prophecies are a standing Argument to all Ages, and the length of Time adds to its Force and Efficacy; and therefore when all that God saw requisite to be foretold, is deliver'd to us in the Scriptures, there can no longer be any need of New Prophecies; which would be of less Authority than the ancient ones, inasmuch as their Antiquity is the thing chiefly to be regarded in Prophecies. For if to foretel Things to come be an Argument of a Divine Prescience; the longer Things are foretold before they come to pass, the better must the Argument needs be.

be. He therefore that requires New Prophecies to confirm the Old, little considers the Nature of Prophecies, and wherein the Evidence and Use of them lies ; but in great Wisdom and Caution will give no Credit to the best Evidence, unless there were something less evident to prove it by.

The chief Enquiry then seems to be concerning the Cessation of Miracles ; but from what has been elsewhere said, the Reason may appear, why the miraculous Power, which the Apostles received by the descent of the Holy Ghost, was not to be of perpetual continuance in the Church, but was to cease in future Ages. For the Cause and End of the Gift of Miracles bestowed upon the Apostles, was to make them capable of being *Witnesses* to Christ ; and when the Gospel of Christ was sufficiently testified, there could be no longer need of such a Power, which was given to enable Men to bear Testimony to it. For what is once effectually proved by sufficient Witnesses, is for ever proved, and needs no after Evidence, if this Proof be preserved and transmitted down to Posterity. The Power of Miracles continued till the Gospel had been Preached not only in *Jerusalem*, and in all *Judea*, and in *Samarita*, but unto the utmost Parts of the Earth ; which was the declared Intention of our Saviour in bestowing it, *Acts* i. 8. And when the Gospel had stood at the Tryals, and con-

conquered all the Opposition that could be made against it by *Jews*, and *Heathens*, and Apostates themselves; when Miracles had been wrought for several Ages, before all sorts of Men, upon all Occasions, and had extorted a Confession from the Devils themselves of the Divine Power, by which they were wrought; when the Books of the Apostles and Evangelists, in which these Miracles are Recorded, had been dispersed in all Nations and Languages, so that it was impossible that the Memory of them should be lost; whence once the Gospel was thus divulged and attested to the World, it could not be necessary that this miraculous Power should be any longer continued: Because this is the only Reason and Design why Miracles should be wrought, to awaken Mens Attention, and prepare them for the Reception of the Doctrin which is revealed, and convince them of the Truth of it.

If then it be enquired, Why the miraculous Gifts, which were at first bestow'd upon the Church, were not continued to it in all succeeding Ages? The plain Answer is; Because this Power was bestowed for the Establishment of the Christian Religion in the World, by convincing Men of its Truth and Authority; and therefore, when a sufficient Evidence had been given in all Parts of the World, of the Divine Authority of that Religion, upon the Account whereof  
these



these Gifts were bestowed, the Reason for the bestowing of them must cease, and the Reason why they should be bestowed ceasing, these miraculous Gifts must of consequence cease with it.

And thus it was likewise under the Law. It is observable, that we read of no miraculous Power bestowed upon any Man before *Moses*. The Creation of the World was delivered down with undeniable Certainty, and the miraculous Judgments of God in Drowning the Old World, in the Confusion of Tongues, and in the Punishment inflicted upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* were sufficient to keep up a Sense of the True Religion. But when a new Institution of Religion was to be introduced by *Moses*, miraculous Gifts were necessary to give Authority to it, and to oppose those false and lying Wonders which were in use among the Magicians in *Egypt* and other Places. In the former Ages Predictions were very frequent, and they were delivered by the Patriarchs, who were Men of unquestionable Credit and Authority, and could have no need of Miracles to confirm the Truth of their Prophecies, which were so usual in those Times; and when the Lives of Men were so long, divers Prophecies of the same Persons had been verified by the Event. But *Moses* had a New Law to deliver, and both He and the Prophets had a stubborn People to deal with, to whom the  
Message,

Message they were charged withal, was commonly very unwelcome; so that till this Institution was fully settled, Miracles became necessary.

But when the Old Testament had been sufficiently authorized and established by Prophecies and Miracles, and when by the Captivities and Dispersions of the *Jews*, the Divine Mission of their Prophets became known among so many other Nations; when the *Jews* were reduced from Idolatry, which they never practised after their Return from their Captivity in *Babylon*; and when they had made numerous Conversions amongst the Heathens, then these miraculous Gifts were no longer continued, as they had been before, in the *Jewish Church*, insomuch that it became a (a) Maxim among them, that after the Death of *Zechariah* and *Malachi*, and the rest of the Prophets, who returned from *Babylon*, the Spirit of God departed from *Israel* and ascended; and for above Four hundred Years together the Gifts, both of Prophecy and Miracles, had been withheld from them, before the Manifestation of Christ. For though there were gross Errours, and dangerous Corruptions among the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, and other Sects of the *Jews*; yet since the Truth and Certainty of that Revelation, from whence these Errours might have been confuted, had been so thoroughly confirmed; all their Corruptions

(a) *Lightf.*  
*Glean. out*  
*of Exod. 5.*  
*vi. Harm.*  
*of the E-*  
*vang.*  
*Luke i.*  
*18. Joh.*  
*ii. 18.*

ruptions and Errors were not a sufficient cause for the continuance of miraculous Gifts; and the *Pharisees* and other Sects, who were most fond and zealous of their several Tenets and Traditions, yet never durst pretend to a Power of Miracles, or Prophecy; but endeavoured to support themselves upon the Authority of *Moses*, and the Prophets.

(b) *id. Fall of Jerus. 5. IX. Harm. of the N. T. 5. LXXIII.* What they sometimes spake of (b) the *Bath Col*, or Voice from Heaven, deserves but little Credit, and amounts but to a Confession; that the Spirit of Prophecy had failed under the Second Temple, as the *Jews* themselves

(c) *More Nevoek. Part. 2. 6. 36, 41.* expressly acknowledge it to have done. (c) *Maimonides* declares, that the *Bath Col* did not denominate Men Prophets, and therefore it is not reckoned by him among the Degrees of Prophecy.

*Book 1.* I have already Proved at large, that the Evidence of those Miracles, which were wrought in the Primitive Times, affords as much certainty to our Faith, as if we ourselves had seen them wrought. And our Saviour plainly says, notwithstanding his Works, which bore Witness of him, that it was not to be expected, that his own Words should be rather believed than the Writings of *Moses*. For had ye believed *Moses*, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his Writings, how shall ye believe my Words? *Joh. v. 46, 47.* And when once the Gospel had been attested by Miracles

Miracles as the Law had been, and rendred as certain to all succeeding Ages, as a constant Power of Miracles could have made it, there could be no Reason, why such a Power should be any longer bestowed. Miracles were wrought in Evidence of the Truth of Revelations made to Mankind in the Old and New Testament, not to decide any Controversies arising amongst those, by whom the Scriptures are received: For to whom the Scriptures are the Rule, by which all Disputes ought to be determined, and therefore the Gifts of Miracles were sometimes manifested among (d) Hereticks for the Con-  
(d) Ad Or-  
thodox.  
inter Ju-  
stin. Mar-  
tyr. Oper.  
Respons.  
v.  
 viction of Infidels, which is the true end and design of Miracles, and not to be any Note of Distinction between the Orthodox and Hereticks.

The learned (e) Mr. Dodwell, by an historical Account of Miracles from the Times of the Apostles through the Ages next succeeding, has shewn, that they were always adapted to the Necessities of the Church, being more or less frequent, as the State of the Church required, till they at last wholly ceased, when there was no longer any need of them. For the only end and use of miraculous Gifts is the Confirmation and Establishment of Religion, and therefore when this is once fully confirmed and established, they can be no longer needful. But it seems rather necessary that they should afterwards cease,

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than

than that they should be continued ; I mean, as to any constant Power of working Miracles residing in the Church. For tho' there may possibly be some extraordinary Cases, in which it may please God to manifest a miraculous Power, yet there is no Reason to conclude that a constant Power of working Miracles should be continued to the Church, but rather that those Gifts should cease, when Religion has been confirmed by a perpetual Course of Miracles for some Hundreds of Years together. Because

I. Miracles, when they became common, would lose the design and end, and the very Nature of Miracles. For the Nature of Miracles consists in this, that they are an extraordinary VVork of God ; not that they are more difficult, than the ordinary works of Nature : All things are alike easy to God, and Miracles are as easy as any thing in the constant course of Nature can be ; the only difference is, that Miracles are his wonderful Work, they are more apt to raise our Wonder and Admiration, and to put us in mind of a Divine Presence. For we wonder at strange and unusual things, and suppose a more than ordinary Reason for them. But if Miracles had continued in all Ages, this Effect of Miracles would have ceased, and they would no longer have been Miracles, but a kind of different Course of Nature. For, according to the best and most accurate  
Philosophy,

Philosophy, nothing in the settled Course of Nature can be performed without an immediate Influence of the Divine Power; but in Miracles this Power manifests its self in an extraordinary manner, above and contrary to the Established Laws, or Rules, which God has in all other cases prescribed for the producing Effects.

II. Men would fancy to themselves some kind of Scheme, or other, and would frame some Notions and Conceits to give an Account of Miracles; or they would imagin them to return of Course at certain Periods, or upon some Accidents, if they saw them frequently done, or perhaps they would suppose them to proceed from some Defect in the Nature of Things, which could not always keep its course, but made many Deviations from it. But when Miracles were wrought only in some Ages for peculiar Reasons, this shews that they were done by an immediate Divine Power, with a particular Design, which could be no other, than the Confirmation of Religion, since they ceased both under the Law and the Gospel, when both were fully declared and confirmed.

III. A perpetual Power of Miracles in all Ages would give occasion to continual Impostures, which would confound and distract Mens minds, and would make the true Miracles themselves suspected. We see



now that the Dreams of every Enthusiast, and the Pretences of every Impostor are apt to startle weak minds, tho' we have so much Reason not to expect Miracles, or Revelations. But if we were in constant expectation of True Miracles, the False would be much more likely to mislead many, and to make others reject the Belief of any Miracles at all.

If Prophecies and Miracles had been frequent in the *Jewish* Church to the coming of our Saviour, his Prophecies and wonderful Works had not so well distinguished and manifested him to be the Christ. But when after so long an Intermission, they were again revived in him, this shewed him to be the great Prophet and *Messias* who was expected. And it is very observable, that as Miracles had been discontinued for a long time among the *Jews*; so St. *John Baptist*, who was more than a Prophet, and one of the greatest of all the Men that had been before him; yet wrought no Miracles, that he might be the better distinguished from the *Messias*, and that there might arise no doubt in the Minds of any, which of them was the Christ. And when our Saviour had been acknowledged to be the Christ in all Parts of the World, it was fit that Miracles should cease, to preserve the Authority due to the Miracles wrought by himself, and his Disciples, it being more for the Honour of Christ,

Christ, that the Miracles wrought in his Name should cease, when his Religion had been fully Established, than that Men should be tempted to doubt who was the true Christ, and which was the true Religion, upon the account of false Miracles wrought in opposition to the True.

IV. Another Reason why the Gift of Miracles has been with-held in latter Ages may be this; because since there has been a general depravation of Manners among Christians, it would have proved a great occasion of Pride and Vain-Glory to those who had possessed it, as we find it was to some even in the times of the Apostles, 1 Cor. xii. xiv. And our Saviour saw it requisite to give Caution to his Disciples, *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the Spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your Names are written in Heaven,* Luke x. 20. It must be an eminent and truly Primitive Piety, that could bear the having of such Gifts with an humble and Christian Temper of Mind.

V. It is an Observation of (f) my Lord Bacon's, That there was never Miracle wrought by God to Convert an Atheist, because the Light of Nature might have led him to confess a God: But Miracles are designed to Convert Idolaters, and the Superstitious, who have acknowledged a Deity, but erred in his Adoration; because no Light of Nature extends to declare the Will

(f) Advan.  
of Learn.  
l. iii. c. 2.

(g) De  
Procur.  
Indor, Sa-  
lute. Lib.  
ii. c. 9.

*and true Worship of God.* For the same Reason, when once the true Religion is confirmed in such a manner, as to have the same Evidence for it, which there is for the Existence of God himself, Miracles are no more to be expected to convert an Infidel, than to convert an Atheist. Among Men of Learning and Reason there ought to be no more doubt of the Truth of the Gospel, than of the Being of a God, and they without the help of Miracles may instruct others. (g) *Acosta* enquiring into the Cause, why Miracles are not wrought by the present Missionaries for the Conversion of Heathen Nations, as they were by the Christians of the Primitive Ages, gives this as one Reason, because the Christians at first were ignorant Men, and the Gentiles learned; but now on the contrary all the Learning in the World is employ'd for the Defence of the Gospel, and there is nothing but Ignorance to oppose it; and there can be no need of farther Miracles in behalf of so good a Cause, when it is in the Hands of such able Advocates, against so weak Adversaries.

However, though there be no such change as was wont formerly to be wrought in the visible Course of Nature, in Confirmation of our Religion, yet there is still a Divine Power evident among Christians living in Heathen Countries. For the Devil, who tyrannizeth over the Heathens, has no Pow-

er over Christians dwelling among them ;  
of which the *Indians* have taken great No-  
tice, and have (b) declared the Christians <sup>(b) Lerii</sup>  
happy in being freed from the Tortures of <sup>Histor.</sup>  
Wicked Spirits, by which they find them- <sup>Navig. in</sup>  
selves often seized on the sudden in a ter- <sup>Brasil.</sup>  
rible manner, and stand in perpetual fear of <sup>c. 16.</sup>  
them. (i) Christians, they do acknowledge, <sup>(i) Capt.</sup>  
have a Prerogative above themselves, and not <sup>Knox's</sup>  
to be under the Power of these Infernal Spirits. <sup>Hist. of</sup>  
It is so generally related by Travellers of all <sup>Ceylon,</sup>  
Professions, both Protestants and Papists, <sup>Part iii.</sup>  
that the Devil exercises a manifest Tyranny <sup>c. 4.</sup>  
over the Heathens, but is able to do nothing  
to the Christians abiding amongst them ;  
that this cannot be denied to be a plain Ar-  
gument of a Divine Power discovering it self  
in Confirmation of the Christian Religion,  
though not by such Miracles as were former-  
ly wrought, because there is no longer any  
need of them.

## C A H P. XXX.

*Of the Causes why the Jews and Gentiles rejected Christ, notwithstanding all the Miracles wrought by Him and his Apostles.*

**T**Hough the Christian Religion be most certain in it self, yet there is a Supernatural Grace required to make us thoroughly and effectually convinced of the certainty of it. *No Man can come to me, says our Saviour, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and this is declared to be the Reason of the Infidelity of such as were offended at his Doctrine, and departed from him. But there are some of you that believe not: for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not; and who should betray him; and he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no Man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of my Father, John vi. 64, 65.* So that the Belief of the Gospel is stiled a *Divine Faith*, not only in respect of its Object, but of its efficient Cause. In attaining to the Knowledge of the Truth of Religion, we must proceed upon the same Principles of Reason, by which we proceed in attaining to the Knowledge of any other Truth. But Reason,

Reason, when it comes up to the Evidence even of Demonstration, though it satisfies the Understanding, yet doth not necessarily gain that firm and lasting Assent of the Will, which is required in Faith; but when the thing proved to be true, is unacceptable, against the Inclinations of the Will, and against the former Opinions and Persuasions of the Understanding, the present Convictions of the Understanding are soon stifled and overpowered by the prevailing Force of the Will and Affections, which carry the Mind off to other and contrary Objects, which it has been wont to think of and believe. Thus it was in the *Academicks* and *Scepticks*; they could not but have the same sense of Mathematical Demonstrations, and other clear Truths, which the rest of Mankind have, whilst they thought of them, and attended strictly to them: But by a constant Practice to amuse themselves with Subtilties, they had wrought themselves to a Persuasion, that nothing could be certainly known to be true; and this general and habitual Opinion soon stifled the Evidence of any particular Truth, which could be represented never so clearly to their Minds.

To as many therefore as lay under long and violent Prejudices, by reason of their former Opinions, and of their Pride and Vanity in contending for them; or by reason of any of those Lusts, which are so  
con,



contrary to the Purity of the Gospel; to such, an extraordinary and miraculous Power of Grace was necessary to establish them in the Faith, or else, though they believed for the present at the sight of some Miracle, yet this was no lasting or well-grounded Faith, *John ii. 23, 24.* And that Grace, which was necessary to their Faith, was denied to some for their Sins, *that they should not see with their Eyes, nor understand with their Heart, and be converted, John xii, 40.* So that Men of great Learning and worldly Wisdom might still continue Unbelievers, and not submit to all the Evidence of the Gospel, because the Doctrine of the Gospel being so contrary to their Habitual Thoughts and Inclinations, there was something necessary to convert the Will and Affections, and to subdue the former Habits which had been rooted in their Minds by frequent Acts and length of Time, and which were too strong for any Convictions of the Understanding, that consisted but in transient Acts, and were soon lost and vanished, through the prevailing contrary Habits both of the Understanding, and Will, and Affections. And therefore Faith must necessarily be an effect of Grace as well as of Reason; and where, because of former Sins and Provocations, this Grace was not vouchsafed, there could be no Faith, though there might be some transient Convictions of Mind, some faint

faint Glimmerings, which were soon damped and extinguished, being overpowered by former contrary Persuasions. And for the same Reason, those who had less Wisdom and Knowledge, but were not under the Power of Habitual Lusts and Passions, and therefore were more easily persuaded to any thing, of the Truth whereof they were once convinced, were likewise the more easily converted.

The Causes why the Word became unfruitful, and so little prevailed with many Men, are in the Parable of the Sower declared to be either inconsiderate Negligence and Ignorance, and the Advantage taken from thence by Satan, or want of Constancy in Times of Tribulations and Persecutions, or the Cares of this World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, and the Lusts of other things, Matth. xiii. 18. Mark iv. 9. It was next to an impossibility for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God, or to become a Christian. They were not Natural so much as Moral Accomplishments, not so much Parts and Learning, as an honest and humble Mind, which were the requisite Qualifications for Men to become Christians: Because as God the more freely bestowed his Grace upon Men thus qualified, so they were the better disposed to be wrought upon by it; whereas others, though they wanted a greater measure of Grace, yet had less vouchsafed to them. For *God resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble.*

Thus

Thus much in the General, I now proceed to give a particular Account of the Causes of the Unbelief both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

I. Since there is so great Evidence, that our Saviour is the true Christ, it may seem a wonderful and almost an incredible thing, that the *Jews* should so generally reject him, notwithstanding all the Means and Opportunities which they had above other Nations of being converted. But,

1. The *Jews* and Profelytes were converted in vast Numbers. Besides the Shepherds, *Simon* and *Anna* the Prophetess acknowledged and adored our Saviour in his Infancy, as the true *Messias*, *Luke* ii. 25, 36. and it is probably (k) supposed that this was *Rabban Simeon*, the Son of *Hillel*, and Father of *Gamaliel*. The Title of *Rabban* was the highest of all Titles, signifying a Prince rather than a Doctor or Teacher, as *Rabbi* doth; and there were but Seven of the Posterity of *Hillel* who were dignified with it. *Nicodemus*, *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, and many others of Note and Eminency received the Christian Faith. About Three Thousand were converted at one time, *Acts* ii. 41. Great Numbers were converted not only of the People, but of the Priests also, *Acts* vi. 7. All that dwelt at *Lydda* and *Saron*, *Acts* ix. 35. Many of the *Jews* and Religious Profelytes followed *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Acts* xiii. 43. At *Iconium* a great multitude

(k) Bux-  
torf. de  
Abbrev.  
Hebr.

multitude of the Jews believed, Acts xiv. 1. Crispus, Chief Ruler of the Synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his House, Acts xviii. 8. And, Sosthenes, another Chief Ruler of the Synagogue, Acts xviii. 19. 1 Cor. i. 1. Apollos an eloquent Man, and mighty in the Scriptures, was a Christian, Acts xviii. 24. Many Thousands (or Myriads in the Greek) Acts xxi. 20. And the number of them which were sealed, was an Hundred and forty and four thousand of all the Tribes of the Children of Israel, Rev. vii. 4. The People were generally well-disposed to receive the Gospel; and when the Chief Priests and Rulers would have Persecuted our Saviour and his Apostles, they were often forced to desist for fear of the People. And if the Apostles did not depart (l) from Jerusalem in the space of Twelve Years (as there is Reason to believe) the number of Converts in all that time must needs be extremely great. The Church of Jerusalem flourished exceedingly from the Beginning, and the Bishops of that City were of the Nation of the Jews for (m) Fifteen Successions, even to the final destruction of it by Hadrian. Many of the Rulers being converted, the Scribes and Pharisees made their Complaints that the whole City of Jerusalem would turn Christians, as (n) Hegesippus informs us; and the Pharisees said of our Saviour, when he was upon Earth, Behold the World is gone after him, John xii. 19. The Epistles of St. Peter and

(l) Euseb. Hist. lib. V. c. 18.

(m) Id. lib. IV. c. 5. Sulp. Sever. lib. II. c. 45.

(n) Euseb. ib. lib. II. c. 23.

and St. James, and that of St. Paul to the Hebrews, purposely directed to the Jews and Israelites, shew that their Conversions were very numerous both in Judea and in other

(o) Euseb.  
Hist. lib.  
III. c. 35.

Countries. (o) Eusebius takes particular notice of the Multitudes of Believing Jews in the Bishoprick of Jerusalem, when Justus the

(p) See Mr. Thornd.  
of the Primit. Government  
of Churches, c. 5. and Dr.  
Hammond on St. John  
Epist. 2. and Rev. xi. 3.

Third Bishop succeeded to that Sec. And (p) at Antioch, and Rome, and Ephesus there was one Bishop of the converted Jews, and another of the Gentiles, and, as

Dr. Hammond supposes, at Jerusalem likewise, but there is little Proof of it. And some of the most Learned Jews have been converted not only in these Times, but in latter Ages. Epiphanius was brought up in the Jewish Religion, as the Greek Menology testifies, and he acquaints us, that (q) Ellel the Jewish Patriarch sent for a Bishop to Baptize him upon his Death-Bed. Samuel Morochianus, Petrus Alphonsus, Paulus Burgenfis, Nicolas de Lyra, Petrus Galatinus, Tremellius, and other Learned Men educated in the Jewish Worship, upon their Conversion have been eminent Defenders of the Christian Religion. Hieronymus a S. Fide, after his Conversion, is said to have brought over many Thousands to Christianity.

(q) Epi-  
phan.  
Hær. 30.  
n. 4.

And the Samaritans as well as the Jews believed, and were baptized both men and women, even Simon Magus himself, Acts viii. 12, 13.

2. Many,

2. Many even *among the Chief Rulers* were convinced that Jesus is the Christ, who durst not own him, *Joh. xii. 42. 43.* But the Love of Riches, and the Praise of Men, made them dissemble their Convictions, and Act against their Consciences, as we see too many amongst us Act against their own Knowledge, and avowed Principles, every day.

3. Many had Blasphemed the Holy Ghost, and thereby rendred themselves incapable of the Mercies of the Gospel; and others by their other great Impieties, had brought them to such an Impenitent state; that their *Eyes* were *blinded*, and their *hearts hardened*, that they should not see with their *Eyes*, nor understand with their *Heart*, and be converted, *Joh. xii. 40. Act. xxviii. 25. Rom. xi. 8.* And this seems to have been one Reason, why Christ commanded his Disciples to conceal his Person, and to say nothing of his Transfiguration till his Resurrection, *Matt. xvi. 20. xvii. 9.* that he might discover himself by degrees, and that the *Jews* might gradually be prepared to Acknowledge him, and not Sin, beyond all possibility of Conversion, before his Resurrection, and the manifestation of the Power of the Holy Ghost in the Apostles, which was the last means of Salvation, and those, who rejected this, were Self-condemned, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting Life,  
*Act.*



*Act. xiii. 46.* or, in effect, they denounced the Sentence of Damnation against them.

4. The *Jews* had violent Prejudices against the Gospel out of Zeal to their Law, and to their Traditions, which were in so much Esteem and Veneration amongst them, they feared that their Believing in Christ might prove an occasion to the *Romans* to come and destroy them. *If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come, and take away both our Place and Nation,* *Jo. xi. 48.* And to prevent this, the Chief Priests, and the Pharisees, in Council agreed to the Expedient proposed by *Caia-phas*, of putting Christ to death, imagining that would effectually put a stop to the spreading of his Doctrine among the People, who, above all things, could not endure to hear of Christ Crucified; for they had general and earnest Expectations of a temporal *Messias*, whom not only their own carnal Hearts inclined them to hope for, but their Religion, as they imagined, commanded them to expect. And the Family of the famous *Hillel* being in so much Power and Authority at that time, might be a great inducement to them, to confirm them in their hopes, and to harden them against the Belief of a Crucified

(*l*) *Lightr. Messias.* For (*f*) *Hillel* himself held the Government, or Presidentship, of the *Sanhedrim* Forty Years, and his Son and Grandsons after him in a continual Succession, for an Hundred

(*l*) *Lightr.*  
Hebr. &  
Talmud.  
Exercit. in  
Matt. 11.1

Hundred Years before the Destruction of Jerusalem: So that the Splendor and Pomp of this Family of *Hillel*, says Dr. Lightfoot, had so obscured the rest of the Families of *David's* Stock, that perhaps they believed, or expected the less, that the *Messias* should spring from any of them; and one of their *Rabbins*, in the *Babylonian Gemara*, was almost persuaded, that *Rabbi Judah*, of the Family of *Hillel*, was indeed the *Messias*. They were all very unwilling to find him in so low and afflicted a Condition, when the Lustre of this Family had for so long a time attracted their Sight and Expectation; inso-much that *Rabban Simeon*, the Son of *Hillel*, is but slightly mentioned, and not with that *Encomium*, with which the rest of that Family are wont to be Celebrated by the Jewish Writers; for this Reason, (g) if *Bur* be (g) De Ab- not mistaken, because he was the same *Sime-* brev. *on* who declared our Saviour to be the Christ. Hebr.

Tho' the *Jews* must have been convinced (if they would have attended to them) by all manner of other Means and Evidence, that *Jesus* was the *Messias*, yet they esteemed Temporal Pomp and Grandeur so essential to the Person and Character of the *Messias*, that they thought the meanness of our Saviour's Condition, and the Ignominy of his Death, was sufficient to overthrow all the Arguments which they could possible have, of his being the Christ; indeed their Minds

were so fixt upon this mistaken Indication, that they little regarded any other.

This bred in them that Ignorance, which was truly very culpable, but which yet was taken notice of in their Favour, as some mitigation of so heinous a Crime, as the Crucifying of the Son of God, Luke 23. 34. Act. 3. 17. 13. 27. 1. Cor. 11. 8. But with all it made them exceeding obstinate, and Deaf to all the Arguments, that could be offered to convince them. When St. Stephen had answered their Accusations, and fully argued the case with them, *they gnashed on him, with their Teeth, and cried out with a loud Voice, and stoppt their Ears, and ran upon him, and stoned him* Act. 7. 54 57. And when St. Paul had declared in all Particular how he was converted, and appealed to the High Priest, and to the Estate of the Elders, for the Truth in part of what he related; yet the People in a Rage and Tumult lift up their Voices, and said, *Away with such a Fellow from the Earth, for it is not fit that he should live; they cried out, and cast off their Clothes, and threw dust into the Air,* Act. xxii. 22. 23. These are not the Actions of Reasonable Men, no wonder therefore, that they were not convinced by Reason.

5. False Christs and false Prophets, with their Signs and Wonders, were then very frequent, insomuch that if it had been possible, they would have deceived the very Elect, Matt.

xxiv. 24. And the Jews were much more enclined to give Credit to these, who complied with their Lusts and Desires, than to examine and consider the clearest Evidence, which must oblige them to take up the Cross, and follow a Crucified Saviour. The Cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling Block, and they would believe any thing rather than it.

6. Upon these and such like Causes, the Jews rejected their *Messias*, and still continue in Unbelief, whereby are fulfilled many Prophecies concerning this very thing, and whilst they endeavour in vain to disprove all other Arguments, their Infidelity and Obstinacy it self is an Argument against them, the Prophets having foretold that they would thus reject their *Messias* as St. Paul proves, *Rom. ix. 27.* And it was no new, or strange thing, that the Jews should resist the Holy Ghost, they always did it, as St. Stephen tells them, *as your Fathers did, so do ye: Which of the Prophets have not your Fathers persecuted? And they have slain them, which shewed before of the Coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the Betrayers and Murderers, Act. vii. 55, 52.*

II. What great Numbers of the Heathen Nations, in all parts of the World, were converted to the Christian Religion, is evident both from Christian and Heathen Authors of those Ages, in which the Gospel was

first Preached; and considering the general Depravation both of the Manners and Principles of those Times, it is no wonder that many should be contented with any Religion, or with no Religion at all, so that they might retain their Vices, rather than attend to any Arguments, which could be brought in proof of a Religion, that must oblige them to abandon and Crucify all their Lusts and Sins, and renounce their Ease and Safety, to live in Disgrace and Misery, and die in Torments. However, notwithstanding all these Discouragements, there was no Rank, nor Order of Men, nor Sect of Philosophers, but divers of the best and wisest of them were early Converts to the Christian Faith, such as *Dionysius the Areopagite; Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Arnobius*, and others. And as nothing but the clear Evidence and Force of Truth could convert these, so it is no unaccountable thing, that others should stand out and oppose it. For

I. *The Greeks sought after Wisdom*; they were only for high and Subtil Speculations, and were so possessed with their own Notions, and a Conceit of themselves, that they would give no Attention to a Company of ignorant Men, who told them a plain Truth of one, that had been Crucified, and Rose again from the Dead. *Christ crucified was unto the Jews a Stumbling-Block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 22. 23. And

And the several Tenets of Philosophy then in Vogue, were a great obstruction to all such, as thought themselves skilled in them, to hinder them from becoming Christians; and we find that some of them after their Conversion could not soon lay aside all their Philosophical Notions. The *Epicureans*, a confident and vain Sect, would receive nothing that could be said to them of a Resurrection and another Life, but with Scorn and Contempt: *And some said, What will this Babler say? And when they heard of the Resurrection of the Dead, some mocked,* Acts xvii. 18, 32. The *Platonists* held a Revolution of all Things into their former State, in some certain Term of Years, and therefore they by their own Principles must look upon all only as a Consequence of such a Revolution and a Period of Time. The *Peripateticks* were persuaded, that the World is eternal, and therefore laught at those who seemed to them to teach that it was now just at an end, and declared that it had a Beginning not many Thousands of Years before. The *Stoicks*, who mightily improved the Moral Part of Philosophy, by borrowing from the Christian Doctrine; yet holding that all Things are under an inevitable Fate and Destiny, had such a perpetual curb upon them, as left them no Liberty to think of changing their Opinions; one of which was that there is nothing Immaterial,



a plain Contradiction to the Fundamental Doctrins of the Christian Religion.

Besides there was a great deal of Pride in the very Composition of a *Stoick*. It (r) appears from the Account which *Arrian* has given of *Epictetus*, that neither the Jewish Law, nor the Christian Religion was unknown to him; for in the Discourses which he has preserved of *Epictetus*, we find him sometimes using the same words with the Scriptures. But it appears likewise from those Discourses, that *Epictetus* was a great Admirer of *Diogenes* the Cynick, and imitated him in his Pride and Haughtiness. For, magnifying himself as one sent by God to be an Example to the World, and to prove that the high Sayings of the *Stoicks* are not vain Boasts, but real and practicable Truths, he at last thus concludes, "How do I converse, says he, "with these Men, whom you fear "and admire? Do not I treat them as "Slaves? Who, when he sees me doth not "think he sees his King and his Master? There could be little hope, that such a Man should be wrought upon by a Religion which enjoineeth, That in lowliness of mind each esteem other better than themselves, Phil. ii. 3.

(u) --Prope (u) *Seneca* in some places, writes as if he est a te Dignus, secum est, intus est. Ita dico, Lucili, sacer intra nos spiritus sedet, bonorum, malorumque nostrorum observator & custos, &c. *Senec. Epist. 41.*

is not always the same, and he likewise discovers a strange Vanity and Conceit of himself and his own Writings. For citing a Passage of *Epicurus*, where he told his Friend, That if he desired Glory, his Letters should make him more famous than all those things which he esteemed, or for which he was esteemed. (a) *Seneca* assures *Lucilius*, That (\*) Epist. he could promise him as much as *Epicurus*<sup>21.</sup> had done his Friend: For he should be Famous in future Times; and could raise and perpetuate the Fame of whomsoever he pleased.

The *Pythagoreans* were a superstitious Sect, and were apt to ascribe all to Magick; and besides they had given themselves up by a blind Obedience to their Master's Dictates, and therefore were to regard no Reasons nor Arguments against them. In short, the Philosophers were all exceedingly prepossessed and prejudiced by some peculiar Opinions of their own, besides the general Prejudices, which they lay under with the rest of the World. And all Men of any Learning and Education studied the Books of the Philosophers, and were commonly addicted to one Sect or other.

It must be confessed, that Vanity and the Praise of Men was the chief aim of many of the Philosophers, as *Tertullian* and others of the Fathers object, and therefore they were very unlikely to become Prose-

lytes to a Religion, which was looked upon in the World with such Disdain and Contempt. Philosophy in general, if we believe

(y) Instit.  
lib. I. c. 1.

(y) *Quintilian*, was in his time by most used as an Artifice and Disguise to conceal the worst of Vices under a morose Look, and a Habit different from that of other Men. And from such Philosophers as these we must expect that the Scriptures should be read with no manner of Candor, or good and serious Intention. (z) *Origen* gives Instances of the wilful Abuse of the Scriptures by some of his Time, who cavilled at half Sentences, without taking notice of the Coherence which they have of the rest. And he complains that (a) *Celsus* seemed never to have read the Scriptures, though he pretended to a very exact Knowledge both of the Jewish and Christian Religion, but understood little of either. (b) *Athenagoras*, who before him had read the Scriptures with more care and sincerity, tho' with the same Design, became converted, and wrote in Defence of that Religion which he intended to oppose. (c) *Hierocles* likewise had read the *New Testament* with a design to write against it, but he who could believe the

(z) Contra  
Cels.  
lib. II.

(a) Ib.  
lib. I.

(b) Philip. Sider. apud  
Dodw. Append.  
ad Dissert. in Irenz. c.  
Cod. MS. Baroc.

(c) Euseb. contr. Hier.  
& Laetant. Institut. lib.  
V. c. 2, 3. De Mortib.  
Persecut. c. 16.

Miracles of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, and prefer that notorious Impostor to our Blessed Saviour, and *Maximus Agienfis*, *Damis* the Philosopher,

and

and *Philostatus* to *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, shews so strange a partiality as might be expected only in him, who opposed the Christian Religion by his Persecutions more than by his Arguments; for *Hierocles* was the chief promoter of the Persecution under *Diocletian*.

2. The Gentiles looked upon the poor persecuted Condition of the Christians as an Argument against their Religion, and were not only prejudiced against a New Religion which must expose them to Sufferings, by that fondness which Men naturally have for their own Ease and Safety, but (d) when they saw the Christians in Distress they would upbraid them, as the Psalmist's Enemies reproached him, saying, *Where is now thy God?* They considered their own Religion as the Religion of their Country, and of their Ancestors, which was what *Tully* said for it, when he ruined all the Grounds and Pretences in behalf of it. They alleged that this had been the Religion of their Forefathers, and that the *Roman* Empire had arrived to so much Power and Greatness under its Influence. This was so much insisted upon, as is to be seen in *Zosimus*, *Symmachus* and others, that *Orosius* set himself to answer it in a particular Work, and *St. Austin*, who put him upon Writing it, thought himself concerned in his own Works to oppose so unreasonable, but fatal a Prejudice.

(d) Aug.  
Civit. Dei  
lib. I. c.  
29.

3. The

3. The Consequence of these Prejudices against the Christian Religion, both in Favour to the Religion of their Country, and in Fondness for their old Opinions, and out of an Abhorrence of Afflictions, and a Disregard of those, who were so much exposed to them, as having but small pretence to any part of the Divine Care; the Consequence, I say, of these Errors and Prejudices was, that the Gentiles despised the Christian Religion before they understood any thing of it. For many Men of Learning and Observation were so little acquainted with it, that they did not distinguish Christians from

(e) Sueton in Claudio, c. 25.

Jews, as we see by (e) *Suetonius*. They knew not so much the true Pronunciation of the Name of *Christ*, or *Christian*,

(f) *Nam nec Nominis certa est notitia penes eos.* Tertul. Apok. c. 3. Sueton. ib. Lactant. Lib. IV. c. 7.

but were wont to write (f) *Chrestus* and *Chrestianus*. This the

*Apologists* much insist upon, that they condemned and persecuted what they did not understand, the Christians desired no more than a fair Hearing, and if they might but be suffered to make their Religion fully known to their Adversaries, they begged no further Favour.

(g) Aug. de Civit. Dei, Lib. XVIII. c. 53, 54.

4. It was believed (g) that the Heathen Oracles had delivered, that the Christian Religion should continue no longer than Three hundred and sixty five Years, and it is observable that *Julian* the Apostate died

A. D.

A. D. CCCLXV. according to some Chronologers, tho' others place his Death Two Years before. It seems the Devil had some great Expectation from his Reign, but at or near that very time, in which he had foretold that the Christian Religion should have an end (if the Computation were to be made from the Nativity of Christ) he saw an end of all his hopes in the Death of that Emperor, who was so zealous in his Service, and had given out severe Threatnings against the Christians of what they were to expect, if he had returned victorious from that Expedition in which he perished. And this Prediction had respect probably to his Reign, though the Greek Verses in which it was delivered might be altered afterwards, or so contrived at first, as to extend it to a longer time, leaving it uncertain from whence the Calculation was to begin. However this Oracle kept many of the *Gentiles* from being Christians, till they saw the time past, which they supposed to be meant by it, as St. *Austin* assures us.

5. The Heresies and Schisms which soon arose in the Church, gave great Scandal and Offence to such, as judged of these things at a distance, and in the gross, without examining into the Occasions of them. The (b) (b) Just. Martyr. Dialog. Jews not only Blasphemed Christ in the Synagogues, but made choice of Men on purpose, whom they sent from Jerusalem into



(i) Id.  
Apol. 2.

(k) Orig.  
cont. Cels.  
lib. 6, 7, 8.

(l) Æl.  
Lamprid.  
in Alex.  
Severo.

to all Parts of the World to vilifie him and his Religion. (i) And because Christians spoke of *Christ's Kingdom*, this was understood to their Prejudice, as if they had been for setting up a Temporal Kingdom by Rebellion. And the evil Doctrins and Practices of divers Hereticks confirmed Men in any ill Opinion, which they had conceived of Christians in general. The absurd Doctrins and Heresies of the *Gnosticks* and other Hereticks, were by the Enemies of the Gospel in their Censures and Invectives applied to all Christians without distinction, and were taken upon Trust by most Men. (k) *Celsus* makes Objections from the erroneous and wicked Notions and Practices of the *Ophitæ*, the *Valentinians*, the *Marcionites* and others. This caused the Christians in their Apologies to press earnestly for a fair and impartial Hearing of their Cause, beseeching their Enemies that they would not be so injurious to the Truth and to themselves, as to despise and condemn what they did not understand: They were desirous to undergo any Tryal, if they might but be admitted to be heard.

6. Yet many, who did not actually become Christians, had more favourable and just Thoughts of the Christian Religion.

(l) *Alexander Severus* had the Effigies of *Christ* in his Chappel, and had designed to erect a Temple for the Worship of him, and to insert his Name among the Heathen Gods.

As

As it is reported, that *Adrian* likewise with the same Intention had commanded Temples to be built without Images in all Cities; but was dissuaded by some, who consulted the Oracles about it, which gave out, that all Men would then become Christians, and the other Temples would soon be forsaken. This, which is related concerning *Adrian*, has been by some supposed to be a mistake, because the Fathers say nothing of it. But *Æl. Lampridius* (or rather *Spartianus*) who mentions it, being a Heathen, might perhaps have it from the *Gentiles*, for it was only in *Adrian's* Intention, to set up the Worship of *Christ*, which might be unknown by the Christians of his time, the design being laid aside upon consulting the Oracles. It was certainly reported in the Historian's time, as he declares, and yet this Objection lies as well against the Report as against the Reality of the thing: For it is strange that a Report of this nature should be mentioned by no Christian Writer, though there had been no Truth in it.

(m) *Emilianus* the Prefect of *Egypt* asked *Dionysius*, Bishop of *Alexandria*, when he was brought before him, why, if he, whom the Christians worshipped, be God, they could not worship him with the other Gods? Many admired the Doctrine, and were convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion; who could not free themselves from the Prejudices of their Education; they would

(m) Euseb.  
Hist. lib  
VII. c. ii

would have been willing to have it taken in among others, but could not bring themselves to relinquish all their old Religions for it. The Calumnies raised against the Christians had caused the popular *Odiurn* and Rage against them, but they were Vindicated by

(n) Plin.  
lib. X. E-  
pist. 97.  
Just. Mar.  
Apol. 2.  
Euf. Hist.  
lib. IV. c.  
8, 9, 13.

(n) *Pliny* in an Epistle to *Trajan*, by *Serenius Gravianus* Proconsul of *Asia* in his Epistle to *Adrian*, by *Adrian* himself in his Rescript, by *Antoninus Pius* in his Epistle to the Common Council or the Community of the Estates of *Asia*, though some ascribe this Epistle to *M. Antoninus* (not to mention his Epistle to the Senate of *Rome*.)

(o) Just.  
Martyr.  
Dial.

(o) *Trypho*, the Jew likewise frees them from the Crimes commonly laid against them, and owns the Excellency of their Precepts contained in the Gospel. And it is observable, that those Crimes which had been wont to be objected against the Christians by their former Adversaries, were not mentioned by *Julian*, in Discourses written to oppose them; who (p) elsewhere

(p) Epist.  
49. &  
Fragm.  
Epist. p.  
305.

speaks of them in such a manner, and so much to their commendation, as shews the mighty force of Truth which could extort it from him. But the Fear and Shame of Men hindered divers from embracing the Christian Religion, who had a truer Notion of Things, than to approve of their own.

(q) Aug.  
Civ. Dei  
lib. VI.  
c. 11.

(q) *Seneca* exposed the Heathen Worship, and express'd himself with bitterness against the Jews, but being able to find nothing to blame

blame in the Christian Religion, nor daring to commend it for fear of giving Offence to the Heathens, he made no mention of it at all.

These and such as these were the Occasions of the Unbelief of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*: Though it must be confessed, that there is nothing more difficult to be accounted for than the Notions and Actions of Men; it is as hard to give an Account how <sup>(r)</sup> *Seneca* <sup>(r) Senec. de Ira. lib. I. c. 25.</sup> and *Plutarch* should allow of the Murdering <sup>Plut. in Lycurg.</sup> or Starving of poor Infants (as they certainly did) as why they were not Christians. No *Phænomena* in Nature can be more variable and uncertain in their Causes than the Opinions and Practices of Men, which differ according to their Tempers and Capacities and Circumstances; it is sufficient, if we can find out any probable Solution, and have several to offer, which might take place according to several Cases. But the Writings of such as opposed the Christian Religion, were very slight and frivolous, containing a Confession for the most part of the principal Matters of Fact, upon which our Faith is established, and raising only some weak Cavils which never came up to the main Cause, or undertook to disprove the Truth of the Miracles and Prophecies upon which it is founded. They could not deny the Miracles, upon which our Religion is established, and then let any Man judge what Reasons they could have

have for their Infidelity. And indeed the prevailing of the Christian Religion under all manner of Disadvantages as to Humane Means, shewed that the Adversaries of it, had little to say against it. For they must be but poor Arguments, which could not dissuade Men from becoming Christians, when they must incur all the Dangers and Sufferings of this World to be so.

The Books of the first Heathen Writers against the Christian Religion are frequently cited by St. *Jerom*, and St. *Austin*, and other Authors of their Time, as commonly known, and probably they were extant long after. So that their Arguments were baffled, and destroyed, long before the Books themselves, and they had Time and Opportunity enough to do all the Mischief that they were capable of. And their Writings are not yet so far lost, but that we still know their Principal Arguments, which the Christian Writers have not concealed, but have given them their full Force, and commonly in their own Words. *Origen* was so careful to omit nothing considerable which *Celsus* had alleged, that he was often forced to make Apologies for mentioning the same things over again, rather than he would seem to let any things pass, which was Material, that his Adversary had said, without taking Notice of it. (s) And some Pieces are preserved entire, as the Petition of *Sym-*

(s) Ambr.  
lib. 2. E-  
pist. 11.  
Aug. Epist  
43.

*machus* among the Epistles of St. *Ambrose*, and the Epistle of *Maximus Madaurensis* among those of St. *Austin*. The Arguments of *Julian* are set down at large by St. *Cyril*; and we Learn from (t) St. *Chrisostom* that the Books of the Philosophers against the Christian Religion, were neglected and despised by the Gentiles themselves, and were scarce to be found but among the Christians, before the Edict of *Theodosius Junior*, to prohibit them.

Παρηγορ.  
α'ς Βαβυλ.  
α'γ. β.  
Vid. Span-  
hem. in  
Julian.  
oper. Prae-  
fat.

There was a long Succession of Philosophers and Sophists, who made it their business to oppose the Christian Religion. The Shool of *Platonists*, which continued at *Athens* for some Ages, would revive, or reinforce, any Arguments, that had been used by their Predecessors in Opposition to Christianity. *Proclus* and *Damascius*, who were of this School, lived about the middle of the Sixth Age, and the Writings of *Damascius* were extant (u) in *Photius's* time, in the middle of the Ninth Age; the History of *Eunapius* was then likewise extant, and is (x) said to be preserved at *Venice*: We have the Abridgment of it by *Zosimus* and a sufficient Specimen of his malicious Invectives in his other Writings. And it is probable, that these, and many other Books of the like nature, which are now lost, continued much longer, than any Accounts, which we have now remaining of them mention. Of about

(u) Phot.  
cod.  
CLXXXI.  
CCXLII.  
LXXVII.  
(x) Voss de  
Grac. Hist.



(y) Hol-  
stein. de  
Vit. &  
Script.  
Porphyrt.  
c. 40.

Thirty Answers (y) which were written to Porphyry, by several Authors, not one of them is now to be found. When the World was satisfied of the insufficiency of his Objections, the Answers to his Books were as little regarded as the Books themselves, but underwent the same Fate with them.

The Jews, who from the beginning of Christianity, before, but especially since, the Destruction of Jerusalem, have in vast Numbers been spread all over the World, and have ever been the most implacable Enemies of the Gospel, had the greatest Opportunity to detect any falshood in it, and have never omitted any Advantage of improving and enforcing the Arguments against it; and and therefore would be sure to retain any thing considerable, which had been objected by their Fore-Fathers, or by the Heathens, with whom they conversed. The Jews have been a perpetual restless Enemy in all Parts and Ages of the World, and nothing material in this Case, would escape their Observation. But out of the Writings of the Ancient Jews, which are still extant, many things have been alleged by many Learned Men, of our own and other Nations, in confirmation of our Religion, from the Confession of the Jews themselves.

The Unbelief therefore both of the Jews and Gentiles of those Ages, is no material Objection; nor altogether so unaccountable

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as the Unbelief of too many now, who were born among Christians, and have had their Education in the Christian Religion. The Truth is, Example is always the weakest Argument in any Case, and can be of no Force or Authority against the clearest rational Evidence.

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C H A P. XXXI.

*That the Confidence of Men of false Religions, and their Willingness to suffer for them, is no Prejudice to the Authority of the True Religion.*

**T**HE Christian Religion doth infinitely surpass all others in the Number of its Martyrs of both Sexes, of every Age and Nation, and Rank and Condition. Mistaken ignorant Zealots may often have suffered for other Religions, but Men of the highest Station and Worth, and inferiour to none in the Knowledge and Experience of every thing that the World esteems Excellent, have renounced all, and upon choice, and after a full consideration of the Merits of the Cause, have laid down their Lives for the sake of the Gospel. Tyrants of the greatest Power and Cruelty have made it their Aim and Ambition

M m 2 by

(a) Gru-  
ter. In-  
script. p.  
238, 280.

by all sorts of Tortures to extirpate the Christian Religion ; they esteemed their Persecutions matter of Triumph, and a fit subject for the (a) Inscriptions of Monuments erected to their Memories. But the invincible Patience and glorious Sufferings of the Christians prevailed against all the Rage and Force of their Enemies. If the Martyrologies of all Religions were to be compared, there would soon appear so manifest a difference between the Christian Martyrs and the Sufferers for other Religions, that nothing would be needful to be said upon this subject. But remembring with whom I have to deal, I am resolved to take every thing at the lowest, and argue with them upon their own Terms. Let us for a while set aside whatever of this nature might be said in preference of the Christian Martyrs, and suppose the Numbers and Zeal of the Martyrs ( for so we must call them at present ) of other Religions, to have been as great as can be imagined, yet the Cause it self makes a plain difference between them.

An ignorant Zeal in a wrong Cause is no Argument against the Goodness of any Cause, which is maintained and promoted by such a Zeal as is reasonable, and proceeds upon sure Grounds. Indeed, it were very hard and very strange, if that which is true, should be ever the less certain, or the less to be regarded and esteemed, because there may be other things that are false, of which some  
Men

Men are as firmly persuaded, and are as much concerned for them, as any one can be for the Truth it self. And yet this is the wisest thing that many have to pretend against the certainty of the Religion, in which they were Baptised, that there are many Impostures in the World, and none is without its Zealots to appear in Vindication of it. I am confident no Man ever parted with any thing, but his Religion, upon so weak a Pretence.

A false Religion is not the only thing for which Men are wont to have an undeserved Value; but their Country, their Friends, and themselves they are commonly as much mistaken in, and do as highly overprize: Is there then no real difference, or solid worth in any of these? Some of the most unlikely Countrys in the World have been admired by the Natives, as if they were the Garden of *Eden*, and the Place of *Paradise*: Though there is nothing easier, than to make a distinction concerning different Countrys. And it is as easie to distinguish between the *Elysium* of the Heathens, or *Mahomet's Paradise*, and the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and between the Ways which lead to them. There is nothing, especially if it be of any Moment and Consequence to them, for which Men have not shewn themselves passionately concerned; and it is not to be expected that they should be so much more infallible in

Religion than in other things; or should be so much less in earnest about it, as not to discover the same Frailties, and the same Affections, which are visible in all the other Actions and Business of their Lives.

It is often seen in most Cases, that some are as earnest and zealous in a false Cause, as others are in a True; but doth this prove that there is no difference between Falshood and Truth? When two Men of opposite Parties are equally confident of the Goodness of their Cause, it is certain that but one of them can be in the right; and it is as certain, that one of them must be, at least, so far in the right, as he contradicts the other; because, as the two Parts of a Contradiction cannot be both True, so they cannot be both False. If then a confident and zealous Persuasion doth not determine Right and Wrong, True and False, the remaining difficulty is how to distinguish them, and that must be by the proper Evidence, and the intrinsic Goodness of the Cause.

And our Evidence in behalf of our Religion is plain matter of Fact, as the Death, and Resurrection, and Ascension of our Blessed Saviour, and the Miracles wrought by him and his Apostles. And if our Religion has sufficient Proof of what we assert in matter of Fact, and other Religions have not sufficient Proof of that Authority to which they lay claim, this must determine the Point,

Point, though a *Mahometan* or *Pagan* should be as zealous for his Religion, as a *Christian* can be. It is commonly and truly said, that it is not the Suffering, but the Cause, which makes the Martyr; and if Men of False Religions have never so much Confidence of the Truth of them, and have no Ground for it, this can be no Argument against the Grounds and Proofs upon which the Evidence of the Christian Religion depends. Other Religions may have their Zealots, who offer themselves to die for them, but the Christian Religion properly has the only Martyrs. For Martyrs are *Witnesses*, and no other Religion is capable of being attested in such a manner as the Christian Religion; no other Religion was ever propagated by Witnesses, who had seen and heard, and been every way conversant in what they witnessed concerning the Principles of their Religion; no Religion besides was ever preached by Men, who, after an unalterable Constancy under all kinds of Sufferings, at last died for asserting it, when they must of necessity have known, whether it were true or false, and therefore certainly knew it to be true, or else they would never have suffered and died in that manner for it; no other Religion was ever attested from its first Propagation for several Hundreds of Years together, by Men who had either seen the first Preachers themselves, or had been acquainted with others who



had seen them, or had wrought Miracles, and seen others work them ; no other Religion is contained in Books, which were written at the first Propagation of it, and dispers'd into all Countries, in all Languages, amongst all sorts of Men, and especially amongst those who were most concerned, and most able and desirous to disprove it, if it had been false ; no Religion besides has by so weak and unlikely means prevailed over all the Power and Policy of the World ; none is in its Doctrin so agreeable to Reason, and so worthy of God for its Author ; and none has been delivered down with so clear a continued and uninterrupted Testimony through all Ages, and conveyed by a succession of Testimonies to this present Age : And therefore no other Religion can have Martyrs, who can die in confirmation of such a Testimony as this, or who can be Martyrs and Witnesses to it by assuring the World at their Death, that they have received the Religion thus testified and confirmed, for which they die.

It is not the bare asserting a thing boldly, and then dying for it, which makes a Martyr, but the Qualifications necessary in a Witness are necessary in him, that is, that he should have all Opportunities needful to know the Truth, as well as no Temptation to speak the contrary. Which Qualifications were evident in the Apostles and first Martyrs, whose

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Testimony is that upon which the Proof of our Religion is founded; and the Martyrdoms of latter Ages are additional Testimonies, which without the former would be insignificant, but supposing them are all the Testimony that can be given to any matter of Fact at this distance of Time, and are as much beyond the Sufferings in behalf of any other Religion, as the Evidence of the Christian Religion is beyond the Evidence for all others.

It is not merely Zeal, though it proceed even to Death and Martyrdom, upon which we build our Faith, but the Reasons which Christians have for their Zeal. Divers Nations have been as earnest Assertors of their Fabulous Antiquities, as others can be of theirs, which are known to be true; but are these ever the less, or those ever the more true upon that account? We insist upon it, that we have Books to shew, and clear Evidence to produce for what we maintain, and these have been examined by many Men in every Age, and compared with what is to be alleged in behalf of contrary Religions, and Men of the greatest Learning and Judgment and Prudence have chosen to die rather than to renounce this Religion for any other, after the nicest and most impartial Examination they could make. Whereas the Zealots and Martyrs for the Religions which are contrary to Christianity, must be acknowledged  
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to be Men that understand nothing of Anti-  
quity, but are ignorant of the History of  
their several Religions, and take all upon  
uncertain Report, and absurd Traditions,  
without any Proof or Possibility of it, and  
even against manifest Reason, and the Evi-  
dence of undoubted History.

So plain is it, that the Zeal and Confidence  
of Men of false Religions, and their Willing-  
ness to die for them can be no prejudice to  
the Authority and Certainty of the true Re-  
ligion. The Enthusiasms and vain Notions  
and Conceits of some Zealots can be no more  
a Prejudice to the Truth and Reality of our  
Religion, than it is an Argument against the  
Truth and Certainty of Human Reason, that  
there are so many Fools and Madmen in the  
World.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

*That Differences in Matters of Religion,  
are no Prejudice to the Truth and Au-  
thority of it.*

**T**HIS is nothing which has proved a  
greater Scare and Scandal to weak  
Minds, nor which gives the Enemies of Re-  
ligion greater Advantage, as they think, a-  
gainst it, than the Dissentions amongst Chri-  
stians,

Stians, and the different Sects and Parties into which they are divided. This makes some willing to conclude that there is no certainty on any side, when they see equal Zeal and equal Confidence in Men of all Persuasions, that contend for their several Opinions.

But St. Paul writes to the *Corinthians*, that there must be not only Divisions, but Heresies also, and not only that they must be, but that they are not without their use and expediency in the Church; They are so far from being any real Prejudice to the Truth and Certainty of Religion, that they do indeed conduce to manifest the Excellency of it, and the Sincerity of those that profess it.

*For there must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you,* 1 Cor. xi. 19. From whence I shall shew,

I. That Differences in matters of Religion must be among Christians, unless God should miraculously and irresistibly interpose to prevent them. II. That it is not necessary nor expedient, that God should thus interpose. III. That these Differences, how great and how many soever they be, even the worst of Schisms and Heresies, are no prejudice to the Truth and Authority of Religion.

I. That Differences in matters of Religion must be among Christians, unless God should miraculously and irresistibly interpose to prevent them. *There must be also Heresies among*

*you :*

you: The miraculous Power and Demonstration of an infallible Spirit in the Apostles themselves could not hinder the rise of them. *It must needs be,* says our Saviour, *that Offences, or it is impossible but that Offences will come; but wo unto him through whom they come;* Matth. xviii. 7. Luke xvii.

The Church can by no means be free from Offences, Scandals and Divisions, unless God should forcibly restrain Men from running into them.

The Tempers and Capacities of Men are very different, and therefore in many Cases they will make a different Judgment of Things. Much Attention and Thoughtfulness, and an exact Knowledge of Antiquity, is requisite to make a true Judgment in divers Controversies; and few Men are willing to be at that pains, which is necessary to inform themselves aright in lesser Difficulties; they are contented to take up with the Appearances of things, which first offer themselves, or to which by Custom and Education they have been most used. There is so much Difficulty to get rid of Prejudices, so much Labour and Study is in many cases required in the search after Truth, that few can prevail with themselves to undergo it. Few Men examine the Ground of things, and fewer do it to any Purpose; most Men follow, as they are led, without any further Care, or Thought, and die in the Religion in

in which they were brought up, without much troubling themselves whether it be true or false, but taking all upon Trust, if they happen to be in the Right, it is by chance, and more than they know, or are able to prove; if they be in the Wrong, they know as little of it, but Right, or Wrong, they follow the Example of others, of whom they have conceived a favourable Opinion, or who have some Authority with them to influence them; they profess their Religion, as they practise other things, for no better Reason, than because they see others have done it before them, and they stand up for it only, as they do for all Customs, which by long use are become familiar, and almost natural to them, but may be worn out by a different Practice and Custom.

And when the Generality of Men are thus careless and unconcerned to examine the Grounds and Principles of their several Religions, this gives a mighty Opportunity and Advantage to Men of ill Principles, and ill Designs, to infuse and spread their Opinions. For if by the Plausibleness and Importunity of their Insinuations, or by the Profession of a more than ordinary Zeal and Strictness in some things, that are most popular, they can but gain a few Persons of Note and Interest, who may influence others, a Party is made, and a Sect set up, which may perhaps continue for some Generations; and a fondness  
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for Novelty, and a Personal Dislike and Prejudice against some Men, and an Esteem and Admiration of others, and several Accidents, as they fall in with the several Tempers and Inclinations of Men, may make great Additions to a Sect that is once formed. Men, who thought themselves disobliged amongst the *Jews*, were wont to go over to the *Samaritans*; and Deserters, in Religion are as usual as in War, upon any great Discontent, or upon hopes of great Advantage. And these Men to Testify their Sincerity, are observed commonly to be most Violent; however they serve to make a Number, and to strengthen a Party.

Most Schisms and Heresies have been begun by Men of ill Designs, who under pretences of Godliness, gratified their own Passions of Ambition, or Covetousness, or more Scandalous Vices. This was the Original of the Heresies in the Apostles days, and it has been observable in the first Authors of them, ever since. An Affectation of Singularity, of Popular Fame, and Preeminence have been the Occasion of great Mischieves in the Church. Some Men are as fond of their own New Opinions, as others are of Honours, or Wealth, or Pleasure; and can bear no Contradiction, but contend for a kind of Empire in Knowledge, and shew a mighty Zeal to gain Profelytes, because this is to extend their Conquests, and

enlarge

enlarge their Dominion over Mens Faith. Some that devoured Widows Houses, have for a pretence made long Prayers. Matt. xxiii. 14. And it is a shame, and Horror, even to speak of those things, which have been done by others; not only in secret but openly, and in the View of the World, under the most solemn and Zealous Professions for the Glory of God, and the Good of Souls. And the Errors of Men of no ill meaning, but of great Zeal, with little Knowledg, have sometimes found a strange Acceptance in the World, for the sake of that Integrity and Sincerity, which appeared in their first Authors.

Now when all the Passions and Infirmities, and Vices of Men thus contribute to produce and promote Differences in Religion, it is no greater Wonder, that there are such Differences, than that there are Frailties and Vices amongst Men; that some Men are vicious, and ready to seduce others, and that others are easy to be seduced.

St. Paul complains of false Apostles, deceitful Workers, Transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ, and no Marvel, says he, for Satan himself is Transformed into an Angel of Light; therefore it is no great thing, if his Ministers also be Transformed, as the Ministers of Righteousness, whose end shall be according to their Works, 2 Cor. xi. 13. 14. 15. Satan himself strives to appear like an Angel of Light,

Light, and Sin is forced to take the disguise of Religion. Vice is a thing, which few Men care much to own, how fond soever they be of it: Numbers in other cases are wont to bring things into Reputation, but it is not so in most Vices, which tho' they have been practised by great Numbers of Men in all Ages, yet have been always nevertheless infamous; and this shews the detestable Nature of Vice and Irreligion, that they could never become creditable in a vicious and irreligious World, but bad Men are ashamed of them, and endeavour to conceal and hide them under some colour of Religion and Vertue.

But since every Vice, and every Passion, and Interest of Men may conduce to the raising and fomenting of Differences in Religion, it is as impossible, that they should not be in the World, as that Sin it self should not be in it, which can never be wholly prevented, unless God should force Men to be Good; and therefore it is impossible, that there should be no Differences in Religion, unless the same Force and Necessity should restrain Men from them.

II. It is not necessary, nor expedient, that God should miraculously and irresistibly interpose to prevent Differences in Matters of Religion: Because it would contradict the very Design of all Religion for God thus to interpose: The Design of Religion is to Direct

rect and Command Men, what to Believe, and what to Do, upon such Terms as may prevail with them by reasonable Arguments; by Exhortations and Encouragements on the one hand, and Admonitions and Threatnings on the other. But to force Men to be of one Mind, and one Profession, would be to lay aside these Terms, and to render the Motives and Arguments which Religion proposeth useleſs, and to have no Regard to the Rewards, and Punishments, by which it is enjoyed. There can be no more Reason, that God ſhould conſtrain Men to have right Notions of Religion, than that he ſhould force them to obey thoſe Notions, and put them in Practice; or that he ſhould reſtrain Men from Hereſies and Schiſms; that is from ſuch Sins as more directly and immediately concern Religion, rather than from any other Sins; But there is great Reason, why it ſhould not be ſo, becauſe this would make Religion it ſelf uſeleſs and inſignificant, by taking away the Grounds and Foundations of all Religions, and by deſtroying the Liberty of Mankind, which is neceſſary in all Acts of Religion. For, he that Acts by Neceſſity, cannot Act by the Principles of Religion, which adviſes and commands Men to *refuſe the Evil, and chuſe the Good*. Differences in Religion could not be prevented without over-ruling all the Paſſions, and hindering all the Vices of Men,

and without frustrating the Commands and Precepts, and contradicting the Design and Institution of Religion; and it is not to be expected, that rather than suffer Differences in Religion, God should so check and restrain Men, as not to leave them at Liberty to Act upon the Principles of Religion, but upon mere Force and Necessity. If Men be permitted to Err and to Sin, they will Err and Sin in Matters relating to Religion, as well as in others, and to debar Men unavoidably from Sin and Error would be to proceed in such a manner, as is inconsistent with the Motives and Arguments both of Reason and Religion, and to offer Violence, not only to human Nature, but to the Wisdom and Counsel of God, in his Dispensations for the Salvation of Mankind.

It is the Wisdom of God not to force Men upon doing Good, but to bring Good out of Evil, and if Men will resolve to commit Sin, and will not be prevailed upon by all that God has said and done to withdraw them from it; then to make their worst Actions instrumental to his own Glory, and to the Salvation of other Men. And there is this good effect from the most pernicious Heresies and Schisms, *That those which are approved may be made manifest by them; that the Sincerity of the good Christian may appear, and that the Disguise may be taken off from Hypocrites, that they may be no longer able to seduce*

seduce Men by a shew of Godliness. It is a just Judgment of God upon unrepenting Sinners, to let them fall from one Wickedness to another, and not come into his Righteousness; to punish secret Sins, by suffering Men to run into publick and notorious Crimes, whereby they discover and expose themselves to the World. Thus it was in the case of those Hereticks of whom St. Paul speaks, *They profess that they knew God, but in Works they denied him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good Work reprobate, Tit. i. 16.* And giving a full and lamentable Description of this sort of Men, in conclusion he says, *But they shall proceed no farther; for their Folly shall be manifest to all Men, 2 Tim. iii. 9.* They were permitted to come to such horrid and frightful degrees of Wickedness and Blasphemy, as that all Men, who meant well, would be sure to avoid them, and to depart from them; and of those who joined themselves with such Men, and went over to them, St. John declares, *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us, 1 John ii. 19.*

And when these and such like Heresies break loose, and disturb the Peace of the Church, this makes all sincere Christians more careful and diligent to hold fast the form of sound Words, and earnestly contend for the



*Faith which was once delivered to the Saints.* Men are apt to be too careless and unconcerned about Religion, when they meet with no Opposition : But when the Faith is denied, and the Terms of Salvation are disputed against, this will stir up and actuate a mighty Zeal in all, who have any regard for the Honour of God, and the Salvation of Men. From whence it comes to pass, that most Heresies have been of no long continuance, but appear and shew themselves, are disproved, become odious, and after a while are hardly known, but from the Books of such as confuted them ; and those Points of Doctrine which were contradicted, become so much the better established, and the more firmly believed for the future. Heresies are but the Tryals of Religion, as Dangers are of Courage ; it stands to the Honour and Evidence of Truth, to be exercised and encompassed with Errors, which fall before it, and are able to do it no hurt.

So that Differences in Religion are suffered by Almighty God, as all other Sins are, because it is the design of Religion, not to compel Men, but to persuade and exhort them, and to permit them to be guilty of all manner of Sin, whilst it offers the most prevailing Arguments and Motives against it ; and to be guilty of Schisms and Heresies amongst the rest : And these are Temptations and Tryals to good Men, and often serve

as

as Judgments upon the wicked, to punish one Wickedness with another, and expose them to the World for Hypocrites and Impostors. And they serve to confirm the Articles of our Faith, which hereby become the more thoroughly examined, and the more fully explained. And these are sufficient Reasons, why God should not by his Almighty Power hinder those Differences in Religion, which must of necessity happen by the Sins and Folly Men, unless he should miraculously and irresistibly interpose to prevent them.

III. These Differences how great and how many soever they may be, even the worst of Schisms and Heresies are no Prejudice to the Truth and Certainty of Religion. Religion is our Direction, our Way to Heaven and Happiness, but will any Man say, that because there are many wrong ways, therefore there is none right? This is beneath the Discretion of every ordinary Traveller, who, if the way be difficult, resolves to use the more Care and Diligence in finding it out, but never concludes with himself that there is no such way, and no such place as that which he intends to go. For a Man to argue from the multitude of Heresies and Schisms against the Truth of Religion, is as if he would prove, that because there are so many *Curve Lines*, therefore there can be none *Right*; when for this very Reason we must conclude, that there is such a thing as streightness, or else

there could be nothing crooked ; for we can have no Notion of one without the other. And as all Obliquity supposes Rectitude, from which it declines, so Vice supposes Vertue, and Error supposes Truth, and Error in Religion must suppose Truth in Religion. For whatever is contrary to any thing necessarily implies the Being of that to which it is contrary ; and that which is not, can have nothing contrary to it. Nothing is more certain than it is, that if there were no Vertue, there could be no Vice ; if no Truth, there could be no Error, and unless there were Truth and Excellency in Religion, it were impossible that there should be any such thing as Heresie or Schism, which are other words for Error and Vice in matters of Religion. And it hath been already observed, that the worst Heresies give an occasion to the clearing those Points of Religion which are disputed against, and so must be far from invalidating the Truth of it.

But because these are things which some will not understand, or may be unwilling to acknowledge ; and it is generally looked upon as a sure Argument of the weakness of any Cause, when those that maintain it are not agreed about it amongst themselves ; let us consider, 1. That all Parties are agreed in the Truth of Religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular : 2. That there is nothing besides in which Men have  
not

not disagreed, as well as in matters of Religion.

1. All Parties are agreed in the Truth of Religion in General. Even Hypocrites and Impostors so far own Religion, as to believe that it is worth the counterfeiting. For no Man counterfeits that which is not, no, nor that which has no Worth nor Excellency in it. No Man will be at much pains to be thought an Atheist, or an Infidel, who is not such; and no Man will endeavour to be thought Vicious, unless he be so indeed. There are few pretenders to the Shame and Infamy which in Ages have been inseparable from Irreligion; but it is the natural Sense which Men have of Religion, that gives it so great Credit and Honour in a wicked World, that even the Shadow and Counterfeit of it has sometimes too much prevailed.

But farther, all Sects and Parties of Christians are agreed in the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the only difference amongst them is concerning particular Doctrins and Opinions, that is, concerning the true Meaning and Explication of it: And no Man disputes about the Meaning of that which they do not at the same time suppose to be. When any Point or Clause of a Law is in Dispute, it would be ridiculous from thence to conclude, that no such Law was ever made; because all Parties must agree that there is such a Law, or else there could be no dispute

about it. And when Differences arise in Religion, it is an Argument for the Truth of Religion, because there can be Difference about nothing, and Men would never differ about Religion, if it were not true, or they did not think it to be so.

But Christians are not only agreed in the main that the Gospel is true, but they are likewise agreed in the Sense and Meaning of it, as to the Fundamental Articles necessary to Salvation. This was the ancient Rule and Measure laid down by *Vincentius Lirinensis*, of the Catholick Doctrin necessary to be believed, that it had been believed in all Ages, in all Places, and in all Churches. And the excellent Arch-Bishop *Usher*, whose

(a) Brief Declaration of the Universality of the Church of Christ, and the Unity of the Catholick Faith professed therein, delivered in a Sermon before the King the 20th of June, 1624.

(b) This Passage was produced by Dr. *Pater*, and defended by Mr. *Billingsworth*, chap. 4. §. 44, &c.

Judgment in the Case may safely be relied upon, has (a) declared; That if at this day we should take a survey of the several (b) Professions of Christianity, that have any large spread in any part of the World (as of the Religion of the Roman and the Reformed Churches in our Quarters, of the Egyptians and Ethiopians in the South, of the Grecians and other Christians in the Eastern Parts) and should put by the Points wherein they differ from one another, and gather into one Body the rest of the Articles, wherein they all did generally agree; we should find, that in those Propositions,

ons, which without all Controversie are so universally received in the whole Christian World, so much Truth is contained, as being joined with holy Obedience, may be sufficient to bring a Man unto everlasting Salvation. Neither have we cause to doubt but that as many as do walk according to this Rule (neither overthrowing that which they have built, by superinducing any damnable Heresies thereupon, nor otherwise vitiating their Holy Faith with a lewd and wicked conversation) Peace shall be upon them, and Mercy, and upon the Israel of God. And he afterwards says, in relation to the Papists in Ireland, that he had sometimes treated with those of the opposite Party, and moved them, that howsoever in other things we did differ one from another, yet we should join together in teaching those main Points, the knowledge whereof was so necessary unto Salvation, and of the Truth whereof there was no Controversie betwixt us.

And as to particular Controversies, tho' one would imagin that wise Men of all others should be least apt to fall out about Words; yet it is an old Observation, that when learned and wise Men disagree in Opinion, the Difference is commonly in the manner of expressing themselves; or however it is generally about the manner of the Existence, not about the Existence, it self, of Things. Thus what is better known by all than the Sun? and yet what Disputes have there been, and ever will be concerning its Light, and Motion,



Motion, and Distance, and Dimensions ?

But it ought likewise to be considered, that in the Management of the Controversies in Religion, such as are otherwise good Men, are wont many times to be little favourable in representing the Opinions of their Adversaries ; and if Men might be allowed to explain themselves, and were not provoked and exasperated beyond their own calmer Thoughts and Temper, the Differences in Religion would not be near so great, nor so many, as they now appear to be. It so happens in all Cases, that Differences are widened by eager and contentious Debates ; Men speak more than they designed, and then resolve to defend what they have said, so that Disputes become endless, and are drawn out into Particulars without number, which were never at first thought of. Many Books of Controversie are half taken up in asking cross Questions; which perhaps neither of the Parties can answer to satisfaction, nor do they often seem to design any thing farther, than to puzzle one another, and to be as captious and as troublesome as they can. But this ought not to be imputed to the uncertainty of the Subject, but to the perverseness of Men ; and those, who upon every occasion fall into so great Heats and Contentions, must needs be very well assured of that in which they agree, that is, of the Truth of Religion in General,

General, and of the Christian Religion in Particular, as to the Fundamental Points of it. The Differences among Christians may serve to prove to us Divine Authority of our Religion, and of the Scriptures, which contain it, since Christians agree in asserting their Divine Authority, and have never been so much at unity among themselves, as to be able to agree to corrupt them, but have certainly delivered them down entire to us.

2. It is not Religion only, which Men Dispute about, but there is nothing besides, in which they have not disagreed. It is observed, that want of Experience and Knowledge of the World, leads Men into more inconveniencies, than want of Parts and Abilities. And it is as certain, that a thorough Knowledge of the Debates and Contentions in Philosophy, would sooner cure most Men of their Infidelity, than any Arguments could do. Those who raise Objections against Religion, if they would but consider, that almost every thing else has as great Difficulties, would be ashamed to reject Religion upon Pretences, which, if they hold, must force them to reject all other things with it, and to believe just nothing at all. There have been Disputes in all Ages concerning Light and Motion, the Wind and Seas, and other Wonders of Nature, but it would be absurd for this Reason, to question, whether there be any such thing as Light and Motion, and  
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whatever besides Men have disputed. And yet it is more absurd, if it be possible, to allow that is a good Argument against Religion, but against nothing else. If the Sun yield his Light, and Nature go on in her constant Course, tho' Men differ never so much in their Philosophy about it, what can Religion be the worse for their Disputes? no body thinks, that he sees ever the less for any Difficulties, which have been urged concerning Vision; and why should we be ever the less inclined to believe the Truth of Religion, by reason of any Controversies in it? Men may dispute any thing, and there is hardly any thing but it has been disputed; but nothing is the less credible for being disputed, unless it can be disproved, but is rather confirmed and advanced by it. Truth, is nevertheless Truth for meeting with opposition, but is the more tried, and the more approved, as Strength and Courage is by the sharpest Conflicts.

Since then there will be Vices, as long as there are Men in this World, and Differences and Dissentions in Religion, as long as there are Vices; since they cannot be hindered, but by the Omnipotent Power of God, and there are great Reasons, why he should not interpose to prevent them; since Differences in Religion are so far from implying any uncertainty in Religion, that they rather prove a Confirmation of it, and are in divers respects  
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made useful and expedient to the Edification of Christians, it must be great inconsideration and weakness, to produce them as an Objection against Religion.

*There must be Heresies, and the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter Times some shall depart from the Faith, giving heed to Seducing Spirits, and Doctrins of Devils, speaking Lies in Hypocrisy, having their Conscience seared with an hot Iron. 1 Tim. iv. 12.* The Scripture could not be true, unless these things should happen, which are foretold in several Places of Scripture. Behold, says our Saviour, *I have told you before, Matt. xxiv. 25.* it ought to be no new nor surprising thing to Christians, to see Heresies arise, tho' they be never so wicked and abominable; because we are forewarned to expect them, and they serve to give a kind of Testimony to the True Religion in fulfilling the Predictions of it. They help to prove the Religion, which they would destroy: For if there had been no Heresies, that Religion could not be True, which has foretold them; but since there are Heresies, our Religion is at least so far true as to contain express Prophecies concerning them, which we see daily fulfilled; and as they evidently prove our Religion true in this particular, so they invalidate it in no other. Which is the (b) <sup>(b) Just. Mart. Dial.</sup> Answer that the Christians anciently returned to the Enemies of Religion, when they made this Objection against it. Let

Let us follow the plain, the known, and  
 and confessed Duties of Religion; Humility,  
 Temperance, Righteousness and Charity,  
 and when once we have no Temptations to  
 with Religion untrue upon the account of  
 the plain Precepts and Directions of it, we  
 shall never suspect it to be so, by reason of  
 any Controversies in it. For if Men will  
 impartially consider things; that Religion  
 which has now For so many Ages stood out  
 all the Assaults and Attempts, with Enemies  
 from without, and Parties within could make  
 against it, and has approved it much better,  
 and more gloriously, than it could have  
 done, if there never had been either Heresies  
 or Schisms. *Let us therefore hold fast the*  
*Profession of our Faith without Wavering,* be-  
 ing assured, that the *Gates of Hell*, that is,  
 all the Power and Stratagems of Satan, shall  
 never be able to prevail against the Church  
 of Christ, but shall only serve to add to its  
 Victories, and adorn its Triumphs. The  
 Malice, O Lord, and fierceness of Man shall  
 turn to thy Praise: And the fierceness of them  
 shalt thou refrain *Pl. Lxxvi. 10.*

C H A P. XXXIII.

*Though all Objections could not be answered, yet this would be no just Cause to reject the Authority of the Scriptures.*

**A**LL Objections, which can with any Colour or Pretence be alleged, have been considered, and answered, by divers Men of Great Learning and Judgment; and several Objections, which have made most noise in the World, as that about the Capacity of the Ark, and others, have been Demonstrated to be groundless and frivolous. But tho' all Difficulties could not be accounted for, yet this would be no just or sufficient cause, why we should reject the Scriptures; because Objections for the most part are impertinent to the Purpose, for which they were designed, and do not at all effect the Evidence, which is brought in proof of the Scriptures; and if they were pertinent, yet unless they could confute that Evidence, they ought not to determine us against them.

He that with an honest and sincere Desire to find out the Truth, or Falshood, of a Revelation, enquires into it, should first consider impartially what can be alleged for it, and afterwards consider the Objections raised against it, that so he may compare the Arguments



ments in proof of it, and the Objections together, and determine himself on that side, which appears to have most Reason for it. But to insist upon particular Objections, collected out of Difficult Places of Scripture, (tho' they would likewise observe the Answers, that have been given, which few of our Objectors have patience to do, but run away with the Objection without staying for an Answer) I say to allege particular Objections, without attending to the main Grounds and Motives, which induce a belief of the Truth of the Scriptures, is a very deceitful way of Arguing: Because it is not in the least improbable, that there may be a true Revelation, which may have great Difficulties in it. But if sufficient Evidence be produced to convince us, that the Scriptures are indeed God's Word, and there be no proof on the contrary to invalidate that Evidence; then all the Objections besides, that can be raised, are but Objections, and no more. For if those Arguments by which our Religion appears to be True, remain still in their full Force, notwithstanding the Objections, and no positive and direct Proof be brought, that they are insufficient, we ought not to reject those Arguments, and the Conclusions deduced from them upon the Account of the Objections, but to reject the Objections for the sake of those Arguments; because if those cannot be disproved, all the Objections,

which can be thought of, must proceed from some Mistake. For when I am once assured of the Truth of a thing, by direct and positive Proof, I have the same assurance, that all Objections against it must be vain and false, which I have, that that thing is true; because every thing must be false, which is opposite to Truth, and nothing but that which takes off the Arguments, by which any thing is proved to be True, can ever prove it false: But all Objections must be false themselves, or insignificant to the Purpose; for which they are alleged, if the Evidence for the Truth of that, against which they are brought, cannot be disproved, that is, if the Thing, against which they are brought, be True.

To shew this in Particulars. If a Man muster up never so many Inconsistencies, as he thinks, in the Scriptures, yet unless he be as well assured, at least, that these which he calls Inconsistencies, cannot be in any Book of Divine Revelation; as he may be, that the Scriptures are of Divine Revelation, he cannot in Reason reject their Authority. And to be assured of this, it must be considered, what is inconsistent with the Evidence whereby the Authority of the Scriptures is proved to us: For whatever is not inconsistent with this Evidence, cannot be inconsistent with their Authority. In like manner, as if a Man should frame never so many

Objections against the Opinion commonly received, that *Cæsar* himself wrote the *Commentaries* which go under his Name, and not *Julius Cæsar*, or any other Author ; unless he can overthrow the Evidence by which *Cæsar* appears to be the Author of them, all his Objections will never amount to a Proof, that he was not the Author.

It is very possible for God to reveal things, which we may not be able to comprehend ; and to enact Laws, especially concerning the Rights and Ceremonies enjoined a People so many Ages past, the Reasons whereof we may not be fully to understand ; and it is very possible likewise, that there may be great Difficulties in Chronology, and that the Text may in divers places have a different Reading : And though all these things have been cleared to the satisfaction of reasonable Men by several Expositors, yet let us suppose at present to gratifie these Objectors (and this will gratifie them, if any thing can do it) that the Laws are utterly unaccountable, that the Difficulties in Chronology are no way adjusted, that the divers Readings are by no means to be reconciled ; yet what doth all this prove ? That *Moses* wrought no Miracles ? That the Children of *Israel* and the *Egyptians* were not Witnesses to them ? That what the Prophets foretold did not come to pass ? That our Saviour never rose from the Dead, and that the Holy Ghost did

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not descend upon the Apostles? Or that any thing is contained in the Scriptures repugnant to the Divine Attributes, or to the natural Notion of Good and Evil? Doth it prove any thing of all this, or can it be pretended to prove it? If it cannot (and nothing is more plain, than that it cannot) then all the Evidence produced in Proof of the Authority of the Scriptures stands firm, notwithstanding all this mighty noise of the Obscurity, and the Inconsistency, and the Uncertainty of the Text of the Scriptures. And the next enquiry naturally will be, not how the Scriptures can be from God, if these things be to be found in them (for it is already proved that they are from God, and therefore this must from henceforth be taken for granted, till it can be disproved) but the only Enquiry will be, how these Passages are to be explained, or reconciled with other Places.

For let us consider this way of Reasoning, which is made use of to disprove the Truth and Authority of the Scriptures in other things, and try whether we are wont to reason thus in any case, but that of Religion, and whether we should not be ashamed of this way of arguing in any other Case. How little is it that we thoroughly understand in natural Things, and yet how seldom do we doubt of the Truth and Reality of them, because we may puzzle and perplex our selves in the Explication of them? For

instance, we discern the Light, and feel the Warmth and Heat of the Sun, and have the Experience of the constant returns of Day and Night, and of the several Seasons of the Year; and no Man doubts but that all this is effected by the approach or withdrawing of the Sun's influence: But whoever will go about to explain all this, and to give a particular Account of it, will find it a very hard Task; and such Objections have been urged against every Hypothesis in some Point or other, as perhaps no Man is able fully to answer. But doth any Man doubt whether there be such a thing as Light and Heat, as Day and Night, though he cannot be satisfied whether the Sun or the Earth move? Or do Men doubt whether they can see or not, till they can demonstrate how Vision is made? And must none be allowed to see but Mathematicians? Or do Men refuse to eat, till they are satisfied how and after what manner they are nourish'd? Yet if we must be sway'd by Objections, which do not come up to the main Point, nor affect the Truth and Reality of Things, but only fill our Minds with Scruples and Difficulties about them, we must believe nothing which we do not fully comprehend in every part and circumstance of it. For whatever we are ignorant of concerning it, that may, it seems, be objected against the thing it self, and may be a just Reason why we should doubt of it. We must have a care of being too confident, that  
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we move, before we can give an exact account of the Cause and Laws of Motion, which the greatest Philosophers have not been able to do ; we must not presume to eat, till we can tell how Digestion and Nourishment are made. In short, this would run us into all the Extravagancies of Scepticism : For upon these Principles it was, that some doubted whether Snow be white, or Honey sweet, or any thing else be of the same Colour or Taste, which it appears to be of, because they could amuse themselves with Difficulties, and they were too much Philosophers to assent to any thing that they did not understand, tho' it were confirmed by the Sense and Experience of all Mankind. They were rational Men, and it was below them to believe their Senses, unless their Reason were convinced, and that was too acute to be convinced, as long as any Difficulty, that could be started, remained unanswered. And thus under the pretence of Reason and Philosophy they exposed themselves to the Scorn and Derision of all who had but the common Sense of Men, without the Art and Subtilty of imposing upon themselves and others.

And it is the same thing in effect, as to matters of Religion. The Scriptures come confirmed down to us by all the ways of confirmation, that the Authority of any Revelation at this distance of time could be expected to have, if it really were, what we



believe the Scriptures to be. Why then do some Men doubt whether they be Authentick? Can they disprove the Arguments which are brought in defence of them? Can they produce any other Revelation more Authentick? Or is it more reasonable to believe that God should not reveal himself to Mankind, than that this Revelation should be his? No; this is not the case, but there are several things to be found in the Scriptures, which they think would not be in them, if they were of Divine Revelation. But a wise Man will never disbelieve a thing for any Objections made against it, which do not reach the Point, nor touch these Arguments, by which it is proved to him. It is not inconsistent, that that may be most true, which may have many Exceptions framed against it, but it is absurd to reject that as incredible, which comes recommended by our Belief by such Evidence as cannot be disprov'd. Till this be done, all which can be said besides, only shews, that there are Difficulties to be met withal in the Scriptures, which was never denied by those, who most firmly and stedfastly believe them.

But Difficulties can never alter the Nature of Things, and make that which is true to become false. There is no Science without its Difficulties, and it is not pretended that Theology is without them. There are many great and inexplicable Difficulties in the  
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Mathematicks ; but shall we therefore reject this as a Science of no Value nor Certainty, and believe no Demonstration in *Euclide* to be true, unless we could Square the Circle ? And yet this is every whit as reasonable, as it is, not to acknowledge the Truth of the Scriptures, unless we could explain all the Visions in *Ezekiel*, and the Revelations of *St. John*. We must believe nothing, and know nothing, if we must disbelieve and reject every thing which is liable to Difficulties. We must not believe we have a Soul, unless we can give an account of all its Operations ; nor that we have a Body, unless we can tell all the Parts and Motions, and the whole Frame and Composition of it. We must not believe our Senses, till there is nothing relating to Sensation but what we perfectly understand ; nor that there are any Objects in the World, till we know the exact manner how we perceive them, and can solve all Objections that may be raised concerning them. And if a Man can be incredulous to this degree, it cannot be expected that he should believe the Scriptures : But till he is come to this height of Folly and Stupidity, if he will be consistent with himself, and true to those Principles of Reason, from which he argues in all other Cases, he cannot reject the Authority of the Scriptures upon the account of any Difficulties that he finds in them, whilst the Arguments by

which they are proved to be of Divine Authority, remain unanswered. And all the Objections, which can be invented against the Scriptures, cannot seem near so absurd to a considering Man, as to suppose that God should not at all reveal himself to Mankind; or that the Heathen Oracles, or *Mahomet's Alcoran* should be of Divine Revelation.

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### CHAP. XXXIV.

*The Conclusion; containing an Exhortation to a serious Consideration of these things, both from the Example of the wisest and most learned Men, and from the infinite Importance of the Things themselves.*

**A**S Wise and as Learned Men as any that ever lived in the World, have died in the Belief of the Christian Religion, when they had no Interest to engage them to it; and many of them have led their Lives under Persecutions, and have at last been put to Death, rather than they would renounce that Faith which the Scriptures declare to us. It cannot be denied but that there have been Men of as great Learning, and as great Numbers of them, professing the Christian Religion, as have been of all other Religions

Religions in the World : Indeed, all manner of Arts and Sciences have been more improved by Christians, than by all other sorts of Men whatsoever ; and all rational and solid Learning is confined, as I may say, within Christendom. For, besides the Idolotrous Worship, and other Impieties notorious among them, whatsoever Learning is to be found among the *Chinese*, or other Heathen Nations, their Notions of Things, so far as they differ from what is contained in the Scriptures, are so obscure and confused at the best, and so groundless, that that Christian must be very weary of his Religion, who can think of changing it for such Uncertainties.

And no Man that profess'd and called himself a Christian ever disbelieved the Scriptures, but there were visibly other Reasons for it than these, which the Nature of the Christian Religion could afford : It was apparent in his Life, that he wished the Christian Religion were false, before he endeavoured to persuade himself that it is not true. Some are possess'd with that intolerable Spirit of Pride and Contradiction, that meer Vanity and a Conceit of being wiser than others makes them find fault with any thing that is generally received ; and the greatest Fault which these Man can find with the Christian Religion is, that they have been bred up in it, and therefore they make heavy Complaints of the prejudices of Education, and the

the hindrances, which ingenious Minds labour under, from the influences of it, in the pursuit of Truth: And these Men perhaps might have talk'd as much, and to as much purpose, for Christianity, as they now talk against it, if they had not been Born among Christians, and been bred up in the Christian Religion; they scorn to be the better for their Education, and are ashamed of nothing more than to believe and think like other Men; and they might almost be persuaded to be Christians still, if they could but be singular in being so: For the mere Affectation of Singularity makes them dispise and dispute against any thing which others allow and esteem. But it will be hard to find any learned Man of tolerable Modesty and Vertue, and who was not as singular in other things, and in his Notions of Religion, but he has firmly believed the Divine Authority of the Scriptures.

It concerns all, who have any Doubts about these things, to weigh the Objections with the Answers that have been given to them by divers Authors, and withal to observe the importance of the Objections, and how far they affect the main Cause; and still to remember, that it is at every Man's own Peril, if he make a rash and partial Judgment. If our Faith could be of no Benefit or Advantage to us, nor Infidelity any Prejudice, we might take the same Liberty to give Credit  
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or no Credit to what we read in the Bible, that we use in the Reading all other Books, and to receive or reject it as we think fit, or to believe only just so much, as lies even with our own Understandings and Notions of Things, and at the worst this would be but Folly in us. But it is madness to reject our own Happiness, and make our selves miserable, because we do not perceive the Reasons of all the Means and Methods, which God has been pleased to use to make us happy ; or are not able to understand every Word of that Book, which contains the Terms of our Salvation.

This is as if a Son should chuse to live miserably, rather than to enjoy a large Estate left him by his Father, because he doth not perceive the design and full meaning of every particular in his Will ; he searches out for all Ways and Arts for cavilling at it, and is fond of any pretence to cast it aside as Counterfeit, being resolved never to believe it to be his Father's ; For his Father was a wise Man, and if it were his, such and such Clauses would not be in it, since there is no reason, that he can see, why they should be inserted ; several things mentioned in it, he believes are mis-timed, the Bounds of the Lands are not described by fit Names ; besides it is interlined, and he never will accept of such an Estate conveyed to him by such a Will ; but chuses rather to be miserable all  
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the Days of his Life. This would be such peevishness and perverseness, as is not to be met withal, where our Temporal Interest is concerned: But too many are too forward to reject the Tenders, and despise the Terms of an everlasting Inheritance in Heaven, tho' at the same time they become obnoxious to all the Curses threatned to Unbelievers, because the Old and New Testament contain some things which may afford matter of Exception and Cavil to captious Men.

God has sent his Prophets to call, and admonish us, and his Son, to reconcile us to himself, by his Death; and to offer us Eternal Peace and Happiness, and he has given us all the Evidence of it, that the nature of the things would admit. The *Jews* have asserted the Authority of the Old Testament from the times of *Moses*, and the Prophets; and the Christians asserted the Truth of the Gospel, when it was impossible for them not to know whether it were true or not; without any prospect of Advantage by it in this World; but with a certain expectation of all manner of Torments and Deaths; and the greatest part of the Known World, was converted to the Belief of it, and became Christians; when in this World, Christians were of *all Men the most miserable*, and were supported only by the steadfast hope and expectation of that Happiness which is promised to us in the Scriptures after this Life. And all things

things considered, we have as sufficient Grounds for the Authority of the Scriptures, as we have, not only that any other Book was composed by the Author, whose Name it bears, but as we have to believe any thing else in the World. Now what do these Men? How do they receive so great a Blessing? Why, they overlook all the Evidence that can be brought to prove the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, and search up and down for doubtful and obscure Passages to disprove it by; not considering in the mean time, that nothing can overthrow their Authority, but that which can invalidate the Evidence, by which it is establish'd. It would be the highest Folly and Ingratitude thus to despise God's Mercy and Care over us, if there were no danger in it, but it being a thing of infinite Danger, it is no less than Madness: For what milder Term can be found to express the desperate Folly of them, who reject a Book, which sets before us the means of Salvation, but at the same time forewarns us upon pain of the severest effects of God's Displeasure, not to neglect them: It is madness, I say, if we rightly consider it, to reject such a Book, and at once both to affront the Mercy, and despise the Threatnings of the infinitely Merciful, and the infinitely Great and Powerful God.

It is a good Caution to the Atheist to forbear his Blasphemies, and Contempt of the  
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Divine Majesty, for fear it should prove true, that there is a God, at last, and then it will be a dismal thing after all his profane Talking and Arguing to be called before that God, whom he has so often denied. And it is as good Advice to those, who make it their business to find Fault with the Scriptures, to consider seriously whether they are sure that these are not God's Word, after all that can be said against them; and if they be not absolutely certain of this, the Name and Title, which they bear, and which Men as wise and as Judicious as themselves, thought to belong to them, should methinks keep Men within some bounds of Modesty, and Discretion. For if they be indeed the Word of God (and nothing is capable of being made more evident.) than how dearly must they pay for a little cavilling Wit and Subtily! The best and most Divine things may be despised and affronted by a bold and Scurrilous Wit, but can Men think it a safe or a prudent thing to ridicule and Scoff at those Books, which, for ought they know, may be of Divine Revelation, when all the Reason, of which they fantasie themselves so great Masters, can never be able to confute the Arguments brought in Vindication of them? Can they value the contemptible Reputation of a little Satyr and Drollery, at that mighty Rate, as to run the hazard of being damned for it?

If Men have any real Doubts or Scruples, they must needs grant, that it is too serious a thing to jest and trifle withal, which no less than the Terms of our everlasting Happiness, or everlasting Misery is the thing in Controversy. And what Wit there may be in it, I cannot tell; but I am sure it is no sign of a very Wise Man to speak contemptibly of a Book, by which he can never prove, but that he must be judged at the last Day. As a Mad-Man, says Solomon, who casteth Fire-brands, Arrows, and Death; so is the Man that deceiveth his Neighbour, and saith, Am not I in Sport? Prov. xxvi. 18, 19. But what Description or Comparison can be found equal to his Madness, who deceiveth and destroyeth himself, and that Eternally, and yet says, Am not I in Sport? Is not this the very perfection of Wit and Raillery?

Wo unto him, that Striveth with his Maker Isai. xlv. 9. Do they provoke me to anger, saith the Lord, do they not provoke themselves to the Confusion of their own Faces? Jer. vii. 19. And thou shalt know, that I am the Lord, and that I have heard all thy Blasphemies. Thus with your Mouth ye have boasted against me, and have Multiplied your Words against me, I have heard them, Ezek. xxxv. 12, 13. Do we provoke the Lord to Jealousy, are we stronger than he? 1 Cor. x. 22.

There shall come in the last days Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts, 2 Pet. iii. 3.  
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*But, Beloved, remember ye the Words; which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you, there should be Mockers in the last time; who should Walk after their own ungodly Lusts, Jude 17. 18. If all that I have discoursed be insufficient to convince these Men; yet let their own Arguments, and even their own Blasphemies convince them; for the very worst that they can say or do, serves to fulfil the Prophecies, and confirm the Authority of the Holy Scriptures.*

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*P I N I S.*

# ADDENDA.

The BOOK having been long ago fitted for the Press, and out of the Author's Custody, he could not insert the following Additions in their proper places.

**C**HAP. IV. p. 112. l. 3. after St. Mark and St. Luke add, If either in the Epistle of St. Barnabas, or St. Clement, it be supposed that the Reasoning is not always just, but is sometimes too Allegorical, and sometimes founded upon Mistakes in Natural Philosophy; yet it is certainly agreeable to the ways of Reasoning, and the Philosophy of that Age, so that nothing of this kind could then be any hindrance or prejudice to the Reception of these Epistles.

**C**HAP. X. p. 222. l. ult. after Principles; add, And besides other Uses, which may be found out hereafter, one very considerable has been already made of the *Satellites*, for the benefit of the World, in rectifying Geography, and determining the Longitude of Places, (a) *M. Cassini* has drawn up Tables for this Purpose, and Written a Treatise on  
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 (a) *Philos. Burgund. Tom. 5. c. 8. Diss. the*



(b) Le Compté's Memoirs, p. 15. and 505. the Subject. And the (b) Missionaries by their Observations, have discovered, that the Empire of China is Five Hundred Leagues nearer Europe, than Geographers have placed it.

CHAP. XI. p. 226. l. 27. after Opinion, add. The same Words which Joshua used, is Translated to wait upon, and wait for, Pl. LXII. l. LXV. v. 36 that all which can be Concluded from the Word is, that the Sun attended, he lengthned the Day, and waited for the Victory, or waited upon the Army of Israel.

CHAP. XII. p. 256. l. 24. after Christ's sake, add. A State of Damnation is a State of Death; and the Soul which lies under the Divine Wrath, is in that State, tho' it be not irreversible during this Life. So that the Death Threatned, being Twofold, viz. of the Soul, and of the Body, it was accordingly inflicted on both: But it was not Threatned, that this Death should be to the final Destruction either of Soul or Body; but thro' the Redemption of Christ, the Body might be recovered from the Death, to which it became Subject, to a Blessed and Glorious Resurrection, and the Soul be restored from the Death, into which it had fallen, to a State of Reconciliation and Favour with God.

CHAP. XV, p. 325. l. 15. after in the New, add, Of the Assistance of Divine Grace,

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we are Taught, *Deutr.* XXX. 6. *Psal.* XXV.  
 4. XXVII. 11. *LL.* 10, 11, 12. *LXXXVI.* 11.  
*CXIX.* 12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68. 108. 124.  
 135. *CXLIII.* 10. *Prov.* I. 23. *Ila.* XLIV.  
 3. *LIX.* 21. *Jer.* XXXI. 8. XXXII. 40.  
*Ezek.* XI. 19. XXXVI. 26, 27.

CHAP. XVI. p. 338. l. 10. after *Religion*, add, The Sovereignty was in due time to be placed in the Tribe of *Judah*; which was fulfilled in *David's* being advanced to the Kingdom, and from that time the Scepter and the Lawgiver, &c.

CHAP. XXII. p. 391. l. 5. after *expected*, add, The Duration of the World is considered in the Scriptures, with relation to *Christ's* coming, and all the Time after his coming is stiled the *last Days*; as in the Description of the Different States of *Job's* Life, the space of an Hundred and Forty Years of it, after his Sufferings, is stiled the *latter end* of his Life; and all the precedent part is Termed the *Beginning* of it. *Job.* XLII. 13, 16.

CHAP. XXVIII. p. 486. l. after *Prophet Jonas*, add, Dr. *Lightfoot* in his *Remains* lately published, has observed, as the Reason, why the *Jews* were so importunate for a Sign, notwithstanding the many Miracles which our Saviour Wrought before them; That their Traditions Taught them to expect these two Signs of the *Messias*, when he came, viz. that he should raise the Old

Prophets, and other Holy and famous Men from the Dead, and that he should bring down *Manna* for them from Heaven. In their Old Writings and Records, he says, they speak much of these Two things of their Expectation. I am inclined to believe that these Traditions, if they had been rightly understood, were not so blind and foolish, as that Learned Author Stiles them, but had respect to the very Time and Occasion, to which our Saviour refers the Jews, when they required these Signs of him. For at his Resurrection many Bodies of Saints, which Slept, arose, *Matt. xxvii. 52.* And speaking to them of the *Manna*, or Bread which came down from Heaven, he puts them in Mind of his Ascension: *What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?* *Joh. vi. 62.* Whereby he intimates, that then would be the time of sending this *Manna*, when upon his Ascension, he would bestow the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. The time was not yet come for these Miracles to be wrought, they were not to be wrought at their Demand; it was sufficient that they had intimations given to expect them, and in the mean time they ought to have been contented with others.

*CHAB. XXX. op. 519. l. 12.* after she pleased, add, But it seems most of all strange, that the excellent Emperour, *M. Antoninus*, who had so much of the Christian Morality, both

both in the Speculation, and in the Practice of it, should not also be of the Christian Faith, especially, if he owned, that a signal Miracle was by the Prayers of the Christians, obtained for the deliverance of himself, and his whole Army, (a) as *Tertullian*, who could not be Ignorant of the Truth of it, declares. (a) Apol. c. 5. ad Scap. c. 4.

But it should be considered, that *M. Antoninus* was very superstitious in all the Heathen Worship, and was so much addicted to the (b) *Sophists* of his time, as not only to endure, but often to humour, their Insolence and Vanity; and from them he had his Notions of Philosophy, which agree with the Christian Doctrine, and not from the Scriptures. For he owns in his Book, from whom he had received his Precepts; but if he had Read and considered the Scriptures, he could never have looked upon the Zeal and Fortitude of the Christian Martyrs, as (c) *Obstinacy*. (b) Philostr. Vit. Sophist. in Herod. Hermag. Aristid. Adrian. (c) Lib. 12.

But the *Sophists* who made it their business to oppose the Gospel, knew, they could not better recommend themselves to him, than by Teaching its Moral Doctrines, and preventing that esteem, which he must needs have had of the Christian Religion, if he had known, that to this those Doctrines, which he so much admired, owed either their Original or Improvement. (c) Lib. 12. § 3.

Whatever opinion he had of the Christians, he was wont to attribute too much to his

(d) Vulcat his own (d) Virtue and Piety, to ascribe his deliverance wholly to their Prayers. And after all the Praises, which have been justly given to *M. Antonius*, it must be acknowledged, that he valued himself extremely upon Two Things, which were very great hinderances to his Reception of the Gospel, viz.

(e) Capit-  
tolin.

The (e) Study of Philosophy, and the Love and esteem of his People. For it is no Wonder, that an Emperour, who made the Philosophy of those times his Study, the *Sophists* his chief Favourites, and Popularity his Aim, should not be Converted to a Religion so unpopular, and so opposite, in some of its Principal Articles, to that which the World called Wisdom.

(f) id.

It is unconceivable upon what Principles of Religion or Philosophy this Emperour could Deify (f) *Lucius Verus* and *Faustina*; but it was impossible, that he could do this, and be at the same time a Christian: that the same Man, who Deified Notorious Wickedness, because it had been Cloathed in Purple, and shined in Imperial Robes, should believe in the Son of God Crucified, is utterly inconsistent.

(a) Aug.  
confess, lib.  
8. c. 2.

*IB. p. 527. l. 3. after at ad. add. (a) Victorinus*, a Man of very great Learning, and who, upon that account, had his Statue erected in the *Forum* at *Rome*; often acknowledged himself convinced of the Truth of Christianity, before he could be persuaded openly

penly to profess it, for fear of displeasing his Friends that were Gentiles. He pretended he might be a Christian as well in Secret, and this no doubt might be the case of many others, who never made open Profession of it.

*IB. p. 330. l. 7. after with them add,* The Doctrines of the *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks* (he speaks of such as were peculiar to either Sect, were little regarded in *St. Austin's* time, and none durst maintain them, but under the Denomination of some Heresy or other: these Two Sects, then were in so little esteem, that they had not Authority enough to give those errors any countenance, which they before had to long with great subtilty and success defended against the *Platonists*: but they who would gain any Reception to their errors were at last forced to assume the Name of Christians, and betake themselves to some Heresy. Of *Plotinus's* School some became Christians, and others applied themselves to Magick; as *Plotinus* himself must have done, if we believe all that *Porphry* Writes of him. The Relation of the Serpent, which was seen under the Bed and then was observed creeping into a hole of the Wall, as he gave up the Ghost, is an odd Story.

**FINIS.**



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